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Fifty-second Session

10th plenary meeting
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Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Milan Kučan, President of the Republic of Slovenia

The President: This afternoon the Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Milan Kucan, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Slovenia, His Excellency Mr. Milan Kučan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kučan (*spoke in Slovene; interpretation provided by the delegation*): Please allow me at the outset, Sir, to express my sincere congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. The expectations of this session are great and the tasks demanding; however, your experience and political wisdom are a guarantee that they will be fulfilled.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency for Razali Ismail, Ambassador of Malaysia, for his energetic and successful presidency of the fifty-first session.

Almost two years have passed since we, Heads of State and Government of the United Nations Member States, confirmed our commitment to the idea of reform in this very Hall. This reform should contribute to the accomplishment of the mission of the United Nations in the current international situation as well as to greater efficiency of the Organization. Today, we have before us a comprehensive set of proposals by the Secretary-General in "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/51/950). This document proves that the discussions held within the last two years, and the experience gained in recent decades, have helped the new Secretary-General to prepare, within a few months, concrete proposals providing a basis for further decisions.

Slovenia joins those who have expressed their appreciation to the Secretary-General for the impressive work he has performed in the first months of his mandate. This work has included concrete measures for the functioning of the Secretariat and proposals for reform. We are well aware, however, that the responsibility now lies with us. We, the representatives of the Member States and the peoples of the United Nations, are responsible for decisions that will give impetus to the necessary reforms and enable the Organization to deal with the tasks of the coming century.

Our approach should not be based primarily on calculations of what individual Member States might gain from the reform. It should above all be based on an assessment of how to reform the Organization so that it will better serve all of us. This will be possible only if



the Organization becomes better able to fulfil its basic tasks — the maintenance of international peace and security and comprehensive economic and social development, particularly in developing countries — and to ensure broad respect for the promotion and protection of individual and collective human rights.

Another important requirement for the success of this reform programme is for the United Nations to take its decisions promptly and on time. The past years have made possible all-round discussion about reform. And now is the time for decisions: Slovenia believes that major decisions should be taken during the first part of the present session of the General Assembly. The President of the General Assembly will play a significant role with regard to those decisions that cannot be postponed. We fully support and encourage you, Sir, in your assumption of an active role and in your determined management of the decision-making process.

Slovenia supports the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report on a programme for reform. This project deserves all our attention and assistance. Its main value is that it offers the possibility of concrete decisions while remaining open to new ideas and proposals.

The proposals for promoting sustainable development, defined as a priority task by the Secretary-General himself, deserve careful examination. The impression is that these proposals are headed in the right direction, although clearer answers to questions on development financing will be required. The "development dividend" created by the streamlining of the Secretariat will not be able to provide all the answers we need. Concrete proposals will be needed to define more accurately the tasks of the proposed office for development financing, which would encourage innovative means of mobilizing new financial resources for development.

Slovenia agrees with the suggestion of the Secretary-General that human rights should be integrated into all principal activities of the United Nations, such as peace and security, economic and social affairs, development cooperation and humanitarian affairs. This approach promises a significant improvement in the activities of the United Nations in these areas. It would also lead to increasingly comprehensive United Nations activities in the field of human rights.

Respect for human rights is achieved not only through the functioning of instruments to monitor compliance with international treaties but also through political, social and economic measures that allow human rights to become an

integral part of social development and a part of the everyday life of each individual. Observance of human rights must be closely linked with the promotion of social progress and the eradication of poverty in order to secure human dignity, essential social security and development. Furthermore, this would substantially contribute to the elimination of political tensions and of the root causes of threats to international peace. Should the United Nations fail to ensure respect for human dignity and the protection of human rights, its basic mission will not be fulfilled.

The new High Commissioner for Human Rights will certainly assume an important role in the search for solutions to salient issues. We note with pleasure that it is Mrs. Mary Robinson, until recently the President of Ireland, who has been appointed to this post. Mrs. Robinson has already won worldwide recognition, and we wish her every success and look forward to her proposals for improvements in the field of human rights.

Reform of the Security Council constitutes an important part of the reform of the United Nations. The period following the end of the cold war only reconfirms the importance of the effective functioning of the mechanisms of collective security. However, it also calls for changes in the composition of the Security Council and for the improvement of its working methods. Slovenia is committed to a reasonable and balanced increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, to a restriction on the use of the veto and to greater transparency in the functioning of the Council. It is our hope that the discussions on Security Council reform, which have been going on for several years now, will lead to appropriate decisions that have the genuine support of the membership of the United Nations.

Slovenia also endorses the approach taken by the Secretary-General in the field of disarmament. Disarmament has been one of the priority goals of the United Nations since its foundation. We have good reason to be satisfied, since disarmament efforts have registered considerable progress with respect to weapons of mass destruction. The Chemical Weapons Convention, signed four years ago, entered into force this year. We expect it to be implemented effectively, although this will be feasible only if the Convention is ratified by all the remaining countries, particularly those disposing of large stockpiles of chemical weapons or of resources for their production.

The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty last year have considerably reduced the dangers created by nuclear weapons. But the time has come to take further steps. We need to ensure universal adherence to the ban on nuclear tests and to accelerate negotiations for the ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Endeavours towards the reduction of nuclear-weapon arsenals should be intensified in order to ensure their gradual elimination.

I wish to place special emphasis on the importance of the early adoption of the international convention on a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel landmines and their destruction. Slovenia has joined those countries that have already renounced their use, transfer and production, and has been participating actively in the Ottawa process since its inception. Negotiations concerning these issues have just been brought to a successful conclusion at the diplomatic conference in Oslo. Early in December of this year, Slovenia will join those who intend, in the presence of the Secretary-General, to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and on Their Destruction.

Disarmament efforts constitute an important element in the strengthening of international security. The formation and implementation of the regional arms control and disarmament regimes represent an effective mechanism in strengthening security. The experience gained during the Balkan crisis, which posed the most serious threat to peace in Europe since the foundation of the United Nations, strengthens our belief that lower armament thresholds should be imposed. More weapons can only present greater temptation and danger.

None of the endeavours aimed at modernizing the Organization by providing relevant answers to global issues will have any guarantee of success if the United Nations proves unable to contribute to the solution of those crisis situations that pose a threat to international peace and that generate humanitarian problems. These situations are now assuming larger dimensions than in any other period of United Nations activity to date. The credibility of the Organization and the functioning of its main bodies must be repeatedly proven. Special importance in this respect must be attached to the activities of the Security Council, which, in accordance with the Charter, bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today, expectations regarding action by the Security Council are more realistic than they were several years ago. However, they are no less demanding. The Security Council is taking an active part in issues concerning international peace on the African continent. It has proved its ability to apply a variety of the methods that are at its disposal in accordance with the Charter. These include preventive diplomacy, cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, classic peacekeeping operations and the use of measured and focused economic sanctions. The appropriate choice of these methods has enabled the Security Council to formulate relevant approaches to the situations in Liberia, Angola and Burundi. As for some other crisis areas, including the Republic of the Congo, the most appropriate approach still remains to be found.

The Security Council is also participating in settling issues which arise after the military conflicts. In Europe, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina provides an example of such involvement. Following the conclusion of the Dayton agreement, which halted the war, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has stabilized to a certain extent. Yet peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still far from secure. The return of refugees is proceeding slowly, is limited, and is facing hindrances. The authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have not been functioning as stipulated in the peace accord, and the principal war-crime suspects have not yet been transferred to stand trial at the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The United Nations has been performing a number of important tasks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in the areas of humanitarian aid, unarmed civil police activity and criminal prosecution. The scope of the present engagement of the United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina is, however, in proportion with the increased coordination of action taken in Bosnia and Herzegovina by other international organizations. At the same time, success in those fields falling within the competence of the United Nations is of critical importance for the establishment of lasting peace.

Let me take this opportunity to stress that the inevitable starting point for solving the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the precise identification of the nature of that devastating war, which has not been completely stopped. If there is a lack of willingness to identify the reasons for and the nature of the war, and its aims and protagonists, then the healing will inevitably be a lengthy and expensive process, with many risks to human life and property. One must even envisage the possibility that the search for peace might prove unsuccessful.

The activities underway in Bosnia and Herzegovina have assumed the character of a post-conflict action, but their aim is also a preventive one. Experience gained in recent years has shown that conflicts often re-emerge in the absence of appropriate preventive action of a diplomatic, economic or, if necessary, military character. The time to withdraw the international forces from Bosnia and Herzegovina will have to be considered very carefully. Withdrawing too early could lead to a recurrence of the initial situation of instability or of armed conflict.

An example of successful preventive action representing an important lesson for the future has been provided by the international operation in Albania this year. Operation Alba was conducted on the initiative and under the leadership of Italy, in agreement with the Albanian Government and with the authorization of the Security Council. That operation has shown how quick and determined action taken by a group of countries in the vicinity of the emerging crisis situation, and with the authorization of the Security Council, can prevent armed conflict and potential destabilization in the region. Slovenia took part in that successful operation and is ready to participate in other preventive actions, as well as in other peacekeeping operations. That readiness has been confirmed by the decision of the Security Council to include a Slovenian contingent in the peacekeeping operation in Cyprus.

The recent international action in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, as examples of regional crises, demonstrates the importance of the participation of regional organizations; such a role has been played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Slovenia's readiness to contribute towards implementing the objectives of the United Nations has also been manifested by the candidature of Slovenia for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 1998-1999 in the elections to be held at the General Assembly in a few weeks' time. Slovenia has confirmed its role as a State that has been successfully coping with the issues of development and of good-neighbourly relations. Within the scope of its possibilities, it has also been striving for long-term stabilization of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the region at large. Through this action and its other international activity, Slovenia has proved to be a factor for peace and stability in Europe.

As a Member of the United Nations, Slovenia is actively participating in the discussion on reform, including the issue of reform of the Security Council. Our readiness

to contribute, in practice, to the work of the Security Council has been manifested by our cooperation in the peacekeeping operations in Albania and in Cyprus. And last but certainly not least, Slovenia has been paying its membership contributions to the regular budget and to the peacekeeping budget in full and on time.

As a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council, we undertake in the event of our election to observe the principles of openness and transparency of action, and will strive to strengthen the ties between the Security Council and rest of the membership of the United Nations.

May I in conclusion reiterate again the importance of this session of the General Assembly and of the decisions to be taken. We have arrived at a stage where we may see the crystallization of solutions that will prepare the United Nations to cope with the tasks of the next century. It is our responsibility to formulate these solutions in a sufficiently clear and comprehensive manner, and in that way provide for the viable future of our common Organization. I firmly believe that we, the present generation, will be able to preserve the United Nations as it was created by our forefathers in the turbulent time at the end of the Second World War, as an Organization committed to the principles of peace, cooperation, development and respect for human dignity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Milan Kučan, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Carlos Alberto Wahnnon de Carvalho Veiga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. Carlos Alberto Wahnnon de Carvalho Veiga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Carlos Alberto Wahnnon de Carvalho Veiga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Veiga (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): My delegation is pleased to greet you, Sir, as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I congratulate you warmly on your election; we have full confidence in your notable qualities as a wise and experienced diplomat.

I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the outstanding manner in which he carried out his responsibilities. We all benefitted from his exceptional ability and his dedication.

We were delighted at the election of the illustrious African Mr. Kofi Annan to the post of Secretary-General at a critical time in the history of the Organization. His splendid performance in other high United Nations posts and the creativity and dynamism that have marked the beginning of his term justify the legitimate hopes we have all placed in him.

The numerous and complex challenges before us at the dawn of the third millennium can be faced only by the combined will and efforts of all Member States. My Government fully recognizes the prominent role of the United Nations in the constant quest for relevant solutions. In today's world, in which sovereignty is less and less respected, interdependence and globalization are becoming increasingly real and tangible. As a result, we need the creation of new tools capable of raising confidence to a higher level and increasing cooperation between all international actors in a collective effort that alone can provide answers to the global questions confronting us.

For several years, our Organization has been experiencing an intensified process of reform aimed at giving it revitalized energy, renewed representativeness and legitimacy, increased effectiveness and greater transparency. The first consensus is emerging, and its benefits will doubtless soon be felt. Recent examples of this include the resolution adopted by the General Assembly following discussions in the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, as well as the adoption of an Agenda for Development, and the gains achieved so far on the road towards an Agenda for Peace.

It is very desirable that equally worthwhile progress take place in parallel with regard to the financial situation of the Organization. In this regard, my country shares the very broad consensus on the need for Member States to respect their obligation under the Charter to pay their contributions on time, in full and without conditions.

Reform of the Security Council is one of the most difficult elements among all the reforms being studied. The broad agreement required for a formula has not yet been found. Cape Verde recalls the joint position of the non-aligned countries, which are demanding non-discriminatory treatment for the developing countries, in particular with regard to the prerogatives accorded to the permanent members of the Council. For its part, Africa is now working to refine practical means for rotation within the continent of the seats that it expects to be at its disposal to represent its Member States.

The Secretary-General has shown us how convinced he is of the imperative for reform. He took certain decisions and began to implement them. He then asked us for advice and proposals. A fundamental objective of the proposed reforms is to provide unity and consistency to the global activity of the system, and thereby to have an increased impact. Structural transformations and changes in working methods are the favoured instruments for the implementation of this objective.

We thank and warmly congratulate the Secretary-General for his initiative, whose focus and broad scope reveal a deep knowledge of the Organization's situation and an enlightened vision of the directions that should be taken. We will give constructive support to these proposals in the consultations that will soon be intensifying at different levels: in the African Group, the Group of 77 and the General Assembly.

The quality of the future to which humankind aspires depends on what we can do today to give human beings their dignity and guarantee that they can enjoy the fundamental rights recognized in the international legal instruments that reflect our collective conscience. We must all commit ourselves to the resolute protection and constant promotion of human rights. The United Nations is dedicated to doing so at several levels and through different instruments. The Commission on Human Rights is one of the important ones, and Cape Verde is gratified that it is able to contribute to its work. To accomplish this task, which is limitless, we must ensure that we construct human rights around the axes that complement and

interact with them, as is the case with democracy and development.

Fully functioning democracy provides a vital impetus for the establishment of a human and institutional environment conducive to development and the implementation of human rights. However, beyond the formal political dimension, conditions must be created that allow all of our citizens to live in dignity and achieve improved standards of living. The right to development is therefore reaffirmed as a cornerstone for concerted action to ensure that such a right can be enjoyed by everyone throughout the world.

It is time to establish a true international understanding for development. Everything possible should be done to ensure that the Agenda for Development, long the subject of negotiation and recently adopted by the General Assembly, is fully implemented in practice. In this context, we regard as promising those concerted efforts recently made by the global institutions, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization in areas critical for development, such as financial flows, investment and commerce. We encourage the intensification of this concerted action, which has also been requested by the Economic and Social Council and encouraged by the Secretary-General. It can make a considerable contribution to the establishment of international cooperation, leading to development at both the global and country level.

We are presently engaged in a race against the clock. Many developing countries urgently need, finally, to experience the stirrings of an economic lift-off within the international trend. Otherwise, we are afraid that the hard-won reforms of the past and present will not be sustained, and will still less be able to gain the social backing that alone can ensure the eventual transition to the second generation of reforms.

The progress that we envisage is not limited solely to the economic arena. Solidarity will also be required. We cannot accept the continued existence of certain barriers that we have erected and that are now impeding us from fully enjoying our fundamental rights. I am thinking of such perversions as racism and exclusion areas based on xenophobia, discrimination which is inflicted on so many individuals, particularly immigrants.

Migratory movements have taken place throughout history. We should treat them with understanding and

dialogue, which will enable us to find solutions to the inevitable problems, rather than allow them to become exacerbated. In this regard, international instruments can be extremely useful. It is important that the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families finally enter into force. We also hope that the Assembly will follow up the resolution of the Economic and Social Council on convening a world conference against racism, racial and ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and other related contemporary forms of intolerance.

On this continuing and unequal march towards development, in which all are involved, some of our countries remain among the least advanced. At a time of increased globalization, to warn against the risk of consolidating and perpetuating the marginalization of these countries is not mere rhetorical overstatement. On the contrary, this danger is very real. The least-developed countries' share of world exports continues to languish at very low levels, and their rate of growth even dropped in 1996.

External trade is vital for reversing the present situation of the least developed countries. The decision adopted in Marrakesh regarding measures to help them, as well as the World Trade Organization Plan of Action adopted last December in Singapore, recognize that the least developed countries urgently need to achieve a lasting increase in their exports. These countries must therefore significantly improve their competitive capability, and their exports of goods and services must have free access to all global markets.

In this sense, we are expecting initiatives from the high-level meeting on the least developed countries, to be held next month in Geneva aided by increased institutional synergy between those international bodies with competence and responsibility in areas critical for the development of the least developed countries.

The foreign debt of these countries continues to grow. The problem continues to be inadequately handled, as regards both the categories of countries covered by initiatives and the actual level of the initiatives. All least developed countries — not only the most critically affected — need adequate and lasting relief.

Moreover, the financing of certain elements indispensable for international integration of these countries, such as infrastructure and education, to cite only a few, requires a significantly increased flow of

public development aid. For the least developed countries, this will become ever more necessary in the future.

In Cape Verde, a least developed country which has suffered a prolonged drought, there is today national consensus about the country's future and the major paths to be followed. The reforms which we are undertaking have the support of the nation, which can legitimately aspire to improving its living conditions today, and not in the distant future.

The fact that the African continent contains the majority of the world's least developed countries speaks eloquently of its limitations. For the international community, Africa is a test of its will and its ability to meet the challenge of global development. The world will not be developed so long as Africa is not developed.

Solutions, as we know, begin at home. The present and the recent past of our continent confirm that we understand this, and are acting upon it more and more. I take this opportunity to thank those in the international community who are firmly supporting Africa's development and encourage them to have greater confidence in the future of our continent and in the partnership between Africa and its friends.

If the Africans continue to step up the changes under way in the right direction, and if there is concrete progress and cooperation in the international environment, it is likely that the positive signs of the last few years will progressively be consolidated in Africa.

However, there are constraints of another nature impeding the general progress sought by our continent: situations of conflict and potential conflict, which continue to proliferate, some of them particularly bloody. Experience — particularly recent experience — has shown that these conflicts are often highly complex. They become deeply rooted and thus thwart any diplomatic or other attempts at solution. However, that is no reason for the United Nations and its Member States to give up their efforts to solve these problems.

Working together and in concert with the United Nations, the Africans are becoming more active in their efforts at the regional level to contribute to preventing and managing the conflicts on the continent. Africa needs international support in order to step up its capacities in this area. Such support should not become a means of discrimination, negative or positive, with regard to certain conflicts as compared with others, based on the subjective

preferences of donors. The multilateral nature of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) implies avoidance of this risk and balanced treatment of conflict situations.

The case of Angola has called for the greatest efforts of the United Nations in Africa — lengthy and repeated efforts. Unfortunately, a new deterioration in the situation, with violent consequences, is not impossible at a time when UNITA is persisting in failing to respect the terms of the Lusaka Accords. Therefore, the most recent Security Council resolution on Angola is fully justified, and we hope that it will have the desired effect. Only a few days from the expiration of its time limit, we urge UNITA to take the decisive steps required for lasting peace in Angola.

We would like to reaffirm here the support of Cape Verde for the people of East Timor in its quest for genuine self-determination, the preservation of its identity, and recognition of and total respect for its rights. We welcomed the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 to two eminent individuals from East Timor, Don Ximenes Belo and Ramos-Horta. That award brought even more international attention to the situation of their people. It is time for reason and justice to prevail, and we welcome the appointment of a Special Representative for East Timor by the Secretary-General within the framework of his redoubled efforts to assist in finding an equitable solution to the conflict in the territory.

Last June, a special session of the General Assembly to assess the implementation of Agenda 21 achieved meagre results. All sides — Governments, international institutions and social groups — are again challenged to honour the Rio commitments and show more determination and responsibility on the environment.

Certainly, with regard to control of the causes of environmental degradation and long-term management of the planet's non-renewable resources, different parties have different responsibilities, but those responsibilities are shared. Among the numerous constraining factors, population and consumption remain major factors. While demographic growth presents encouraging medium- and long-term indicators, unbalanced rates of consumption persist and even increase, putting unsustainable pressure on resources.

My country, a country of the Sahel and an island nation, is particularly sensitive to certain threats to the environment, such as drought and desertification, which

were the subject of an international Convention giving particular attention to the situation in Africa. The Permanent International Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), of which Cape Verde is a member, is taking action with a visible impact, which merits continued support by its external partners.

Another factor for environmental deterioration — this time a social one — is the scourge of drugs and the human degradation to which it leads. To combat illegal drug trafficking and the laundering of the money it generates, close international cooperation is required, particularly in the exchange of information and logistical and material support. This is a global phenomenon, and the means to combat it must also be formulated globally, with national and regional foundations. The West African subregion, through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has begun concerted efforts. The Political Declaration of Praia last July laid down the basis for growing cooperation between the countries involved.

The last years of this millennium mark the end of an extraordinary period. The era which began with the fall of the Berlin Wall will go down in history as an era of an explosion of the ideals of liberty and progress such as had not been seen since the great wave of independence in the 1960s.

These gains, together with the dizzying advances of science and technology, attest to mankind's extraordinary ability to come up with imaginative answers. However, mankind has not yet freed itself from feelings of indifference and exclusion, and often even of hate. This is perhaps the major challenge as this century comes to a close.

The complete achievement of the noble objectives of the Charter would doubtless represent a decisive step towards such emancipation.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Alberto Wahnnon de Carvalho Veiga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, His Excellency Mr. Algirdas Saudargas.

Mr. Saudargas (Lithuania): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to your honourable post. You may count on our full support and dedication to your goals.

You, Sir, have inherited the legacy of the outgoing President, Ambassador Razali Ismail, which we can build on: friendly atmosphere, lively debates, productive spirit, strong desire for change and reform, and, last but not least, brilliant management of the Assembly's work. My Government congratulates Ambassador Razali on his outstanding performance.

I come from a country that is in the midst of comprehensive reforms. Top-to-bottom institutional changes have reshaped our society from its very roots, establishing a commonly accepted democratic way of life. Radical changes involved in introducing a market economy have borne fruit. Today, our democracy and market economy are inextricably linked with the new security and economic framework of a united Europe.

Our reform experience demonstrates that the courage to grasp the moment — to respond rapidly if and when the changing situation requires — a key for success. We have this key in our hands, and we need the determination to use it. With the end of the cold war, the fall of the bipolar system and the failure of power politics have given us a new chance to look deeper into the core of the United Nations and to reshape it in line with the needs and expectations of its Member States and for the benefit of all. The picture of the road ahead is visible.

We want this session of the General Assembly to be dominated by the programme of reforms. Lithuania's Government supports the Secretary-General's reform initiative, which is expected to spur most fundamental changes. We are confident that the Secretary-General will successfully implement that part of his programme which falls within his own responsibility.

It is unlikely that everyone will be happy about every part of the proposed reforms. We, the Member States, have to see the Secretary-General's proposals in their entirety, and, rising above narrow national interests, find a compromise on every step that brings us closer to a more focused, more efficient, more transparent and more democratic United Nations. Lithuania is ready to play an active part in achieving agreement on a United Nations structure that will reflect the nature of the United Nations mandate and its core functions: maintenance of peace and security, sustainable development and

promotion of human rights, humanitarian assistance, and social and economic progress. They should be placed within a strict time-frame. Otherwise, lack of dynamics in the negotiation process will cause a loss of direction.

What is of special concern to us is that the financial difficulties of the Organization are affecting its performance and endanger the progress of reforms. Lithuania will fulfil its financial obligations to the United Nations and urges other States to do so. At the same time, United Nations financing must reflect a State's capacity to pay. The scheme of limits has to be removed from the new scale of assessments that is to be negotiated this autumn. Lithuania continues to support the package of comprehensive proposals put forward by the European Union designed to put the Organization on a sound and predictable financial footing.

Although the reform of the Security Council started as a separate process, it is now part of the entire package of United Nations reform. It was inspired by the general acknowledgement that the time had come for the Council to reflect new realities in world politics. Today we have more nations able and willing to serve permanently on the Security Council than in the days of its inception. Two such States are Germany and Japan. Asia, Africa and Latin America, too, legitimately aspire to have new permanent seats. And there are more States whose contributions to the goals of the United Nations point to the need for greater appreciation and better accommodation of their interests.

We want a comprehensive reform of the Council whereby the number of non-permanent seats increases as well. The Group of Eastern European States, whose number has more than doubled over the past few years, deserves at least one additional seat. Our position on this is very firm.

We also need a more transparent and democratic Security Council. But, most important, the reform should continue to progress. This year's discussions have been productive, thanks to the efforts of the former President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali. I hope the process will retain its vigour.

In the post-confrontation era, there are far too many weapons around the world. Fortunately, today there are more tools to control the spread of the most deadly weapons. Last year we adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — a major breakthrough in nuclear disarmament, which is feasible when pursued in consecutive steps. The next step should be to ban the spread of fissile material for nuclear warheads.

The world's attention has been captured by the negotiations in Oslo on the agreement to ban one of the most inhumane weapons: anti-personnel landmines. We support these efforts, which require profound rethinking of national defence strategies in many countries, including Lithuania. Confidence-building measures and security cooperation will help humanitarian concerns reign over military purposes.

We have faith in regional and bilateral efforts to disarm. Europe has set out on the path of toughening the requirements for the stationing of conventional forces, through the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. We support this process and believe that it can be a model for other regions.

Even though the total number of peacekeeping operations and their average size have been reduced in recent years, peacekeeping is still the key instrument available to the United Nations in discharging its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Together with Estonia and Latvia, and with Poland, Lithuania is developing joint peacekeeping units. Apart from its genuine objective of contributing to United Nations goals, this exercise is, in itself, a testimony to full understanding and cooperation among the neighbouring countries of our region.

In recent years we have witnessed an increase in the role and functions of international civilian police in peacekeeping operations. The civilian police forces can play a major role, through assistance to local police forces, in rebuilding national police and judicial systems, in restoring civil order, in supporting the rule of law and in facilitating national reconciliation. The need for assistance from international civilian police is likely to increase. It can be met by properly functioning United Nations standby arrangements, which are designed to expand the rapid-deployment capacity of the Organization. Lithuania has decided to join the United Nations system of standby arrangements for peacekeeping operations. Later today, I shall submit to the Secretary-General a detailed description of our permanently available contribution, including well-trained police officers.

Nations around the world are being challenged by certain phenomena which know no boundaries and which can be tackled only by joint action. Fighting international crime, drug trafficking and terrorism and ensuring environmental protection and humanitarian aid are among such challenges.

Lithuania wholeheartedly supports the Secretary-General's reform effort to strengthen, through the United Nations entities in Vienna, the Organization's capacity coherently and systematically to address threats to the stability and development of society created by transnational crime in all its manifestations. For its part, the Government of Lithuania is determined to enhance regional structures combating transnational organized crime as well as fully to implement bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements in this area.

We also look forward to the special session of the General Assembly in 1998, which should enable the international community to develop new and improved strategies to address the problem of illicit narcotic drugs.

Although the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly was not a milestone of success and ended with few commitments, we strongly believe that the political will demonstrated by the presence of so many Heads of State and Government will be translated into action. The next occasion to demonstrate the seriousness of our intentions to protect the environment and to agree on specific targets for reducing the emission of greenhouse gases, which were not realized at the special session, will be the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Kyoto, Japan, this December.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will afford a great occasion to see what has been done and what can be done about the protection of and respect for basic international human rights.

We welcome the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson as the High Commissioner for Human Rights and express our support for the structural reforms of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. Internal restructuring of the United Nations human rights organs should go hand in hand with close cooperation in human rights issues between the United Nations and such regional arrangements as the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and others.

Illegal migration and trafficking in migrants threaten stability in Central and Eastern Europe. We believe that treaties on readmission between the States of the region could be a key instrument against these threats. Lithuania urges the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States that have not yet done so to accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967

Protocol and to further strengthen national institutions responsible for the management of migration flows.

We believe in a regional approach to regional issues. We praise the United Nations reliance on regional organizations. The Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe is a good example of what a regional institution with a limited budget can do rather than placing the burden on the United Nations. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is another good example. The record of the two organizations in the former Yugoslavia is much better than what could have been achieved had the United Nations alone dealt with the war.

Along with other measures towards a more consolidated peace, good-neighbourly relations have become vital for regional security and stability. We have done our utmost to establish and maintain friendly relations with our neighbours, while simultaneously taking practical steps towards integration into the European Union and NATO. The accession of Lithuania to European and transatlantic institutions will have a significant impact on lasting security and stability. Yesterday the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Primakov, proposed a different security model of our region. However, creating a substitute for transatlantic integration is not in line with our vision. The international Vilnius conference entitled, "Coexistence of Nations and Good Neighbourhood Relations — A Guarantee of Security and Stability in Europe", for which Lithuanian and Polish Presidents Algirdas Brazauskas and Aleksander Kwasniewski acted as hosts in September of this year and which was attended by 12 Heads of State and Government, received joint greetings from the Presidents of Germany and France, Roman Herzog and Jacques Chirac. They wrote:

"It is time to foster a culture of cooperation and dialogue all over Europe and to harness the political energies of our peoples to bring about reconciliation and understanding ... Only in a spirit of unity, community, friendship and good-neighbourly relations, as well as mutual understanding, will we be able to build the future of our continent."

Here at the United Nations, I am tempted to quote this sentence, but with the last word, "continent," in the plural.

The President: I now call upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, His Excellency Mr. Miguel Angel Burelli Rivas.

Mr. Burelli Rivas (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Speaking here on behalf of my country, I wish to congratulate the new Secretary-General of the Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, after nine months in his post, now for the first time faces the responsibility of a session of the General Assembly, a session that is likely to be noteworthy and hard-working. Given his vast experience, he is well aware that the prestige and influence of his important post derive from the impartiality that places him above all pressure of interests and raises him to the permanent status of arbitrator for all and a symbol of the Organization.

Mr. Panou (Togo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I also wish to offer my congratulations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udoenko, on his appointment as President of this session of the General Assembly.

The pace of events today means that subjects that we considered just last year seem obsolete. Nevertheless, as we have still not found solutions to the most pressing problems facing the international community, it is logical to keep returning to those that are of concern to every member of that community and to the community as a whole, which now finds itself in the midst of the most rapid process of change in history.

Inevitably, therefore, we will again go over, for example, human rights, the rule of law, free elections, the war on drugs, corruption, disarmament, terrorism and other compelling issues that crop up constantly among our concerns and in our work nowadays.

I must place on record the fact that the Government of Venezuela has taken measures on all these issues to ensure increased respect for human rights, to wage war on drugs and to promote further disarmament and assist in the fight against corruption. Naturally, it is not easy for any country to show a clean record. A Government's good intentions as regards human rights will always immediately come up against recurring internal violence and still untamed unruly elements, as in the example constantly presented by the audiovisual media in developed countries. But the will exists and an effort is being made to make Government agencies increasingly aware of our resolve to protect guarantee human rights.

I wish to highlight the work done by the first United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, Mr. José Ayala-Lasso, and welcome the new High Commissioner, the

former President of Ireland, Mrs. Mary Robinson, to whom my country wishes every success in the stimulating but difficult task ahead of her.

With regard to corruption, terrorism and disarmament, my country, which proposed and was able to gain approval for the Inter-American Convention — the first of its kind in the world — in March 1996, remains steadfast in its efforts to ensure that every country is aware of the need to punish wrongdoing in government, wrongdoing that has tended to be treated with great indulgence. It may not be possible to eradicate corruption, but timely punishment — by ending impunity — will make such action risky.

We have been enthusiastic supporters of all initiatives aimed at limiting the arms trade, in addition to being aware that there are free markets often beyond Government control, we are concerned that the industrialized countries, by lifting embargoes in this field, may begin moving towards the opposite extreme and promote the sale of weapons everywhere, under pressure from the military industry, which has an extremely powerful lobby.

My country has resolutely backed the programme to eliminate landmines, hundreds of millions of which have been irresponsibly and thoughtlessly scattered in territories on every continent, daily taking their toll of many innocent victims, particularly children, whose mutilation by landmines is a constant reminder that we need to ensure justice for humankind.

The fact that Venezuela has a neighbour where illegal drugs continue to be planted, processed and sold places us in the unfortunate position of being part of the supply route and within an area influenced by drug money. That is why the Government of Venezuela has taken every precaution to keep this danger to a minimum. It fights trafficking on land and sea and in the air, and has intercepted large shipments of drugs. The official in charge of all Government action against this powerful enemy of humankind has been given the rank of Minister.

It goes without saying that we look forward hopefully to the next special session of the General Assembly, on illegal drug trafficking, to be held at the request of Mexico. We hope that it will produce clear solutions that will enable us to wage a more successful war on this scourge and, above all, put an end to money laundering, where Government efforts have so far been least successful.

As the threat of ever more pitiless and atrocious acts of terrorism has spread around the world and, to no small extent, here on our American continent, Venezuela has taken an interest in ensuring that the international community is made increasingly aware of its responsibilities in joint efforts to approve a convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings. That convention is currently being considered by the General Assembly, in a body that should be completing its work shortly.

When the Inter-American Convention against Corruption was approved, we voiced our hope that, given that the disregard for of ethical standards that has fostered this crime has been a worldwide and not a strictly American phenomenon, the subject would one day be taken up by the United Nations in order to produce an international convention giving voice to the concern felt by all countries over this problem and harnessing the general willingness to put an end to impunity. The day seems to have come when the Member States of this Organization will work together to do away with the tolerance encountered on all continents towards this canker afflicting politics and administration; a canker whose breeding ground is not underdevelopment, but the moral decay of the State and society; a canker that seriously and increasingly hinders the trade that is a necessary part of economic globalization.

My Government has welcomed the idea of changes not only in the structure, but even in the philosophy of this 50-year-old Organization. Since the lives of the peoples of this world have undergone such profound changes, it would be inexcusable for the United Nations, which represents them all, to remain untouched.

We have considered the various plans for reforms and watched the efforts made by the outgoing President of the General Assembly over these past few months to achieve some, at least, of the essential changes to the system during his term in office. And, although we believe this issue to be both timely and urgent, we do not feel that there is imminent consensus on the suggested changes which, above all, relate to membership on the Security Council. In any case, it is only fair to recognize the serious efforts being made to end the stagnation within this Organization and launch the debate that is just beginning.

Venezuela supports an increase in the number of permanent Members on the Security Council, provided there is no discrimination of any kind and that there is due regard for the interests of the international community, including fair representation of all geographical regions, in line with other new circumstances.

We feel that there are great expectations and high hopes that the Secretariat will become more efficient and that the Organization's burden of projected expenditures may be eased. It is also essential that Member States pay their contributions on time. None of us can refuse to honour a freely accepted obligation, nor make payment conditional in a way that presents a threat to the equality of States and the dignity of the world forum of which we are a part.

My country's position, however, is not limited to this alone. It goes beyond an analysis of the opportunities and rules of the veto to the elimination of the veto altogether. It has to do with the reform of the Secretariat itself and with economic and social issues, especially funding for development, as envisaged in the relevant document. That is why we feel that consideration should be given to the ideas recently expressed by both the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement as regards not only this subject, but also consensus on the other reforms.

Venezuela supports the convening of an international conference on financing for development, in cooperation with international financial institutions, to propose innovative and bold mechanisms in this area. Such mechanisms must include the mobilization of capital resources for investment in non-industrialized countries while at the same time, opening the door to the opportunities offered by the private sector.

Non-governmental organizations — increasingly active in today's world — could contribute even more towards attainment of the aims of the Charter of United Nations in this field of action. My country has launched an intensive round of consultations with these organizations in what it has called a "Dialogue between senior Government and non-governmental organizations", so as to draw up a plan for the promotion, protection and observance of human rights in Venezuela.

We welcomed the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses as a well-conceived initiative. That is why Venezuela played an active role in the various stages of the drafting of the document, which required years of work, and led to the successful conclusion of a document that includes virtually all the provisions on this subject that exist in international law. My country signed the Convention yesterday and we call upon other countries to do the same.

As Venezuela has always been in favour of the establishment of an international criminal court, we wish to draw attention to what the international community has done to deal with and punish international crimes against peace and security, first with the creation of ad hoc courts and then with the creation of a permanent body such as that court. By thus institutionalizing and centralizing the political will of States, we will help prevent the possibility of the winners in a conflict from being tempted to become the judges of the defeated.

This seems the appropriate time and place to mention the Ibero-American community of which Venezuela is a part and the five hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's only landing on continental America in his voyages.

Since 1991, 500 years after the discovery of America, thanks to an initiative of the King of Spain, the 21 countries that proudly share the honour of being members of the Ibero-American community have met once a year, in a different city each time. I say "proudly" because in their colonial endeavours both Spain and Portugal took a missionary approach. While imposing their political power and territorial government, they also disseminated Christianity and passed on with conviction their European civilization and culture. Thus in Spanish and Portuguese America, the mixing of blood and cultures took root, making our world a different one, a world characterized by social egalitarianism, religious tolerance and a strong and deeply rooted freedom. The effects of this situation, which defines and unites American existence from north to south, makes this community stand out. It does not set it apart from others, but, in this era of globalization, it affirms the very particular features of Ibero-American identity.

This idea has evolved well, beginning in Guadalajara, then continuing in Madrid, Salvador de Bahia, Cartagena, Bariloche and Santiago. The seventh summit meeting will be held on Margarita Island in my country.

As the host country suggests the key topic for discussion at each meeting, the President of Venezuela, Mr. Rafael Caldera, has proposed the general heading of "Ethical values of democracy", a suggestion that has been accepted with great enthusiasm.

The Governments of Venezuela and the other 20 countries of Ibero-America insist that it is not enough to have formal democracy if corruption is rampant, if inefficiency persists, if justice is not effective, or if the

action taken by the democratic sectors is neither satisfactory nor transparent.

Thus, this general topic encompasses other very specific issues having to do with social justice, human rights, electoral transparency elections, the sincerity of political parties and, unavoidably, truth in information. That is the nucleus of the agenda for the meeting to be held on 8 and 9 November on Margarita Island.

It is not out of place to explain to this Assembly that there are good reasons for this agenda. The economic changes and the political upheavals of our world have wreaked havoc on the set of values that was, until recently, the foundation on which people's lives rested.

The weakness of social justice is pathetic. In more than a few countries, unavoidable macroeconomic adjustments have affected vast numbers of people who are victims of injustice and who are unable, both mentally and physically, of coping with these changes, leaving them even worse off than they were before. Something must be done to improve the lot of these multitudes during a transition that, although necessary, is still painful.

The subject of human rights, which I mentioned briefly at the beginning of my statement, is vitally important, and it would not be surprising if some day it were to replace "democracy" as a term and as a concept. Certain statements on this subject may have been exaggerated in the heat of the moment. But the truth is that we must march firmly forward towards a time when every human being, without exception, feels for his fellow man the same respect that he asks for himself. This is a matter of education, training and will on the part of Governments, so that the bad examples from the more developed countries that are passed on by the media do not lead the developing countries to continue violating these rights.

Despite the fact that democracy has taken root in virtually all the countries in our region — seemingly the desideratum of our times — it now faces a variety of dangers, such as elections rigged by international organized crime. The most specific and dangerous case has to do with the influential role that drug trafficking and money laundering now play in elections, allowing crime to become closely entwined with political power.

My country's position in this regard is to warn political parties to make sure their electoral campaigns are

transparent by keeping these campaigns short and to the point so as to avoid any improper financial influence.

Democracy is, by its very nature, a system of political parties. There is no democratic system without political parties. Yet it is obvious that the downfall of democracy is often due to carelessness on the part of the political parties on which it is based, when, setting aside the ethics of service, ideology and efficiency, they are tempted to take advantage of the resources of the State using the pretext of lengthy, complex and costly election campaigns. It would seem that the time has come to return to the old political ideas or to invent new means of expression in order to heal and revitalize democracy.

Many people reacted by voicing doubts and fears when the subject of the people's right to truthful information was raised. Media groups have even claimed that this proposal is full of hidden dangers. Nevertheless, the straightforward intent of this proposal is to strengthen the influence of the media at a time when they are virtually the first estate. We consider this right to be the counterpart to the media's right to carry out their activities in absolute freedom, given the fact that society legitimately aspires, in turn, to be properly, accurately and truthfully informed.

In an era in which the media have the most amazing technologies at their disposal — such as those providing instantaneous communication — there can be no explanation for information that distorts, embellishes or tampers with the truth. All the power that we give the media, essential for the values of democracy, would be lost if the media were to step outside their role and begin voicing opinions instead of reporting or made themselves part of the day-to-day debate of ideas.

What Venezuela hopes to achieve by this debate is to make clear the responsibilities that each actor must play in a democracy, and the media are very important actors. That is the reason for this initiative: to warn and caution them, not by suggesting rules, but by appealing to a sense of responsibility, prompted by their own conscience, with regard to the worthy part that information must play in building a safe and trusting society.

Following on from comments I made at this year's Ibero-American Summit in Venezuela, I wish to mention the five-hundredth anniversary of the day when Christopher Columbus set foot on continental America, in August 1498, at the Paria Peninsula in Venezuela. Until then the feats of exploration by the discoverer of the New World had been limited to the islands of the Caribbean. He was not

absolutely sure that he was actually standing on continental soil when in 1498 he reached Macuro, a small village on the eastern coast of Venezuela, but he certainly wondered as he witnessed the thrust of a strong current that overcame the gentle waves and gave proof of the presence of a great river, the Orinoco. This was an extremely important event for my country, which we plan to commemorate properly. It was the only time the great admiral stood on *terra firma*, which he called "Land of Grace". In making this announcement, we hope the global community will join us in our celebration.

In closing, I wish to express Venezuela's faith in the ability of the Organization to act as a permanent arbitrator for peace and development. There is a greater need every day for the United Nations to act as the voice and conscience of humanity, but never as the spokesperson or tool of any group, region or interest other than the community which created it and of which it is the core.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina, His Excellency Mr. Guido di Tella, on whom I now call.

Mr. Di Tella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In recent years we have, happily, drawn closer to the ideals enshrined in the preamble of our Charter. We have taken substantial strides towards the ideal of peace and security; strengthened and broadened the observance of human rights; enhanced and developed international law and widened the scope of international penal law, in particular; and laid the foundations for greater responsibility by States in the advancement of social progress.

However, even as we draw closer to these goals, we see rapid changes in our countries and in the world which present a new and complex challenge for the Organization. The challenge begins when we note that the benefits of globalization fall short of being able to alleviate the situation of extreme deprivation from which more than a quarter of the world's population suffers. Similarly, we see more clearly new threats to security and development, such as drug trafficking, terrorism, corruption, and irresponsible assaults upon the environment.

The process of reform undertaken by Secretary-General Kofi Annan must first and foremost identify what is the essential role of the United Nations. We believe that it unquestionably continues to be the maintenance of

international peace and security. In order to achieve this we must bring about a world where sustainable development is possible and where the norm is the rule of law; respect for human rights, including respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities; and non-discrimination by reason of race, religion, gender or anything else.

The United Nations, through the General Assembly, must continue to be in the vanguard on all these issues, playing the role which in the past enabled it to overcome the scepticism of the times and successfully to combat colonialism, champion nuclear non-proliferation, and, even more important, alert the world to the grave risks of environmental pollution, marginalization, poverty and that new form of moral pollution: corruption.

Although, on the whole, reform has aroused feelings of hope, we must overcome the present climate of scepticism and support the Secretary-General. In a world which today is increasingly marked by globalization, the autonomy which formerly characterized State action has been considerably limited. This obliges us to reassess the classical concept of sovereignty, by which I mean flexible and dynamic — not static — reassessment. Argentina has participated with conviction in the process of reform and commits itself to continue to work actively in its implementation.

The question of the Middle East is going through a difficult phase. The peace process begun in Madrid in 1991 must necessarily continue, with fulfilment of the Oslo and Washington Agreements.

We fully support the determined efforts made some days ago by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mrs. Madeleine Albright. We are certain that time will show that those efforts were timely and well-directed.

Our country likewise firmly supports the system-wide Programme of Action for the economic recovery and development of Africa, as well as the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa launched by the Secretary-General in March 1996. We attach particular importance to the mobilization of financial resources for the African continent, and we note with satisfaction the first signs of renewed activity in some very important areas of that continent.

With regard to international security, we welcome the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which we hope shortly to ratify. Likewise, we extend our unqualified support to the Ottawa process to ban anti-

personnel landmines. Our commitment to this noble initiative was made manifest in 1994, when we offered to assume the task of removing the mines laid in the Malvinas Islands. We laid those mines ourselves and thus felt a sense of responsibility. We hope that we shall soon be able to achieve the agreement that will allow us to complete that task.

A lasting peace requires United Nations contingents endowed with the capacity to deploy rapidly and effectively. Accordingly, Argentina, together with other countries, is working to improve mechanisms of deployment. In this context, allow me also to recall that, next year, Argentina will mark the fortieth anniversary of its participation in peacekeeping operations. That is a great many years.

The magnitude of the adverse consequences for individuals of current conflicts requires us to exert our utmost efforts with regard to humanitarian assistance. Such assistance constitutes an indispensable element in peace-building. Accordingly, the "White Helmets" initiative has made possible a growing mobilization of human and financial resources, bringing about a healthy reassessment of humanitarian assistance criteria and procedures.

In order to consolidate a lasting peace, we must not allow impunity to prevail for crimes that offend the conscience of humankind. The creation by the Security Council of tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda is a recognition that justice and law are inseparable components of the system of collective security. Argentina firmly supports the creation of a general and permanent international criminal court. We trust that the Rome conference in 1998 will make possible the realization of this initiative.

Let me also say that the Argentine Government firmly intends to pursue its struggle against the abusive consumption of psychotropic substances and illicit narcotics trafficking, as well as related offenses.

In the subregional context, we are proud that the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) continues to grow in both the commercial and political spheres, which are interrelated, and to contribute to advancing integration in the hemisphere. MERCOSUR is a clear case of open regionalism. It has not resulted in the distortion or diversion of trade but has, rather, generated trade both between the countries of the region and with countries outside it. Argentina, jointly with its other

MERCOSUR partners, is active in the formation of the American Free Trade Area (AFTA). MERCOSUR has introduced a proposal for negotiation of AFTA based on a phased approach.

With regard to regional security, Argentina has been a leader in reducing residual tensions in the area. It has contributed to the attainment of such cherished goals for the nations of South America as the resolution of border problems in a climate of confidence with our neighbours and by promoting common positions in support of strengthened democracy and political and economic stability. Accordingly, we have, through the Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action of the Rio Group, been promoting the Declaration on the Defence of Democracy, to which we attach great importance as one more means to advance peace and security — goals that can be achieved only with representative democracy. We also welcome the inclusion of Bolivia and Chile as full members of the Mercosur Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action.

With our neighbours, friends and partners, we are pursuing a deepening of the dialogue on security and defence. We are adjusting it to the new international and regional reality, convinced that security is enhanced through integration. Indeed, the basis of security in the Southern Cone is the friendship and cordiality of its countries. In this context, military cooperation has increased, with positive results for transparency and mutual confidence-building. As a result of these efforts, Latin America today can point with pride to the peace and harmony that prevails among its States.

There remains, however, in the South Atlantic, an important unresolved issue: the question of the Malvinas Islands. I reaffirm once again the legitimate rights of the Republic of Argentina in that dispute and its appeal for a peaceful and lasting solution.

In keeping with the repeated appeals of this General Assembly and the Decolonization Committee, we believe that it is imperative to resume negotiations on all aspects of the question of the Malvinas Islands. No Member of the United Nations should evade the obligation to resolve a dispute by peaceful means as laid down in the Charter of this Organization. We call for the parties to sit at the negotiating table and discuss all the relevant issues.

We have made too much progress with the United Kingdom to avoid addressing this issue. We have made very important strides in building our bilateral relationship

with the United Kingdom, which are reflected in heightened economic, commercial and cultural relations between the two countries. We have recreated a climate of mutual trust in the South-West Atlantic, which enables us today to cooperate in the conservation of living resources and in the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons. Undoubtedly, these activities would gain substantial impetus from the resumption of direct links between the mainland and the islands, which have proven to be most beneficial in the past. Nothing, however, replaces human contact between individuals.

I trust that the new British Government will heed our appeal and that of the international community to pursue a dialogue without preconditions with a view to finding a definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands. To the islanders, I once again reiterate our firm commitment to fully respect their way of life, culture and institutions, as stated in our national Constitution.

The Decolonization Committee, which has historically played a decisive role in this sphere, has shown itself to be the appropriate forum to continue addressing the situation of the Malvinas Islands and other dependent territories. Accordingly, the six countries that make up the MERCOSUR Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action have reaffirmed the importance of the work of the Committee of 24 on the decolonization process, which has not yet been completed. We trust that the Committee will maintain its effectiveness to the full.

Another fundamental issue is the composition of the Security Council, which in 1945 was consonant with the reality prevailing at the end of the Second World War. That is no longer the case, however. On the eve of the twenty-first century, we should not design a model that only adds new discriminations to those we have inherited. That would be a conceptual mistake. Argentina, while understanding the position of each Member State on this matter, is of the view that there is not yet a general agreement concerning the increase in the number of permanent members. We all agree that the reform of the Security Council should make it a more democratic and representative body. To reach that goal, each region will need to arrive at a compromise without being pressured or rushed.

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Summit of Heads of State of the Rio Group has agreed that the region itself will have to decide how to fill the

seats assigned to it. Argentina is of the view that an open-ended mechanism of rotation should be established that will enable the participation of all those States that have shown their commitment to and respect for the Charter. This would avoid discrimination against those States that, like Argentina, bear greater financial responsibilities. In short, the Argentine position is aimed solely at promoting the ample participation of all States of the region, without any exclusion whatsoever.

I must say, however, that there is more to this matter than the increase in the number of members. Methods of work and procedures also need to be updated. In this context, I concur with the comments made by the representative of New Zealand.

It is our firm conviction that reform of the United Nations must necessarily be built upon two fundamental pillars. First, it must respond to the requirements and expectations of the international community. Secondly, it must reflect a general agreement among the Member States. It is only in this way that the Organization will retain its relevance in the twenty-first century.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kwamena Ahwoi, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of Ghana.

Mr. Ahwoi (Ghana): The delegation of Ghana congratulates His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udoenko on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. His long experience in the affairs of this Organization and the great qualities which he brings to this high office assure us that under his wise guidance the work of this session will be fruitful and constructive. To that end my delegation pledges to him its full support and cooperation.

My delegation also wishes to pay a special tribute to his distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, who conducted the business of the fifty-first session with remarkable zeal and efficiency. The promptitude and energy with which he discharged his responsibilities as President has left an enduring imprint on the work of this Organization.

To our distinguished Secretary-General and my compatriot, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, we wish to express our deep appreciation for his sterling qualities of leadership. The people of Ghana are indeed grateful to the world community for having chosen a son to head this very high and important body. Barely nine months after

assuming his onerous responsibilities, Kofi Annan has demonstrated an indefatigable energy and commitment to the reform and efficient management of the Organization to enable it to measure up to the purposes and objectives of its existence. We pledge to him our continued unflinching support.

At the fifty-first session, Member States warmly welcomed the conclusion of the Pelindaba and Bangkok Treaties establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa and South-East Asia respectively. We also welcomed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has since been signed by the vast majority of States, including my own. We view these as progressive steps on the road to nuclear disarmament. We therefore renew our call on the nuclear-weapon States to cooperate with the rest of the international community for the commencement and early conclusion of multilateral negotiations on a universal and binding convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons, and mandating the destruction of the existing stockpiles.

We make these appeals not as an annual ritual but because of our deep conviction that the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, will go a long way to promote international peace and security, a principal purpose for which this Organization was established.

While weapons of mass destruction deserve the priority attention accorded them by this Assembly, the question of conventional weapons cannot be ignored either. The illicit transfer and use of this category of armaments are a source of great concern, since they constitute a threat to the stability of States and fuel the numerous conflicts which bedevil the world today, particularly in Africa. They also provide terrorists, drug barons and other criminals the means with which to pursue their illegal activities. We must adopt all available means to curb the illicit traffic. In the same vein, we support ongoing international initiatives to conclude a treaty banning the production, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines, which continue to kill and maim innocent people and disrupt the economic and social life of millions, long after the end of the conflicts in which they were laid.

Though the end of the cold war has greatly reduced the threat of another global war, which twice in this century brought untold sorrow to mankind, intra-country conflicts and civil wars continue to wreak havoc in

several countries, with resultant loss of lives, destruction of national infrastructure, displacement of innocent persons and outflow of refugees into neighbouring countries. In Afghanistan, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone and the Republic of the Congo, we see the havoc caused by this new trend and its potential threat to regional and subregional security.

We in Africa are all the more concerned. For while the international community is prompt to react to conflicts in regions of economic or geo-strategic interest to the rich and industrialized world, conflicts in some developing countries, particularly in Africa, I am sorry to say, fail to elicit the same degree of response. Thus, peacekeeping, which is a primary function of this Organization, has also fallen prey to geo-strategic parochial considerations. We hasten to warn that such double standards threaten the concept of collective security which constitutes the very foundation of this Organization.

In the West African subregion, we have endeavoured to fill the gap left by international inertia and selectivity. After nearly eight years of fratricidal civil war and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) intervention in Liberia, countries of the subregion, with only the limited assistance of the international community, finally succeeded in supervising the conduct of presidential and legislative elections in the country in July 1997, under conditions generally acknowledged to be free and fair.

We are happy to welcome the worthy representatives of the elected Government of Liberia to this Assembly. For true and lasting peace in that country, we urge the international community to stand by the people of Liberia as they set out on the difficult road of national reconstruction. We are proud to have been part of the process to restore peace and legitimacy in Liberia, and pray that the Liberian Government and people will continue on the path of national reconciliation in order to consolidate the hard-won peace, which is vital for social and economic development.

While we applaud the return of peace to Liberia, we deplore the onset of violence, disorder and destruction following the unjustified overthrow of the democratically elected Government of President Tejan Kabbah in Sierra Leone. We call on the leaders of the coup to heed the unequivocal condemnation of their act by the international community and cooperate with the efforts of ECOWAS to restore constitutional order in Sierra Leone.

In recent years, my delegation has had cause to express its concern and regret at the continued imposition of unjust sanctions on Libya by the Security Council, in defiance of the expressed wish of the vast majority of States represented in the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement. We note that Libya has fully met the requirements of Security Council resolution 731 (1992) and is willing to cooperate with the other parties concerned in the dispute. We urge the Security Council to revisit the issue and ensure a peaceful solution of the conflict and an end to the sanctions.

We also reiterate the call of the Non-Aligned Movement and other States on the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial measures and actions unilaterally imposed on Cuba, in contravention of the United Nations Charter and all principles of international law.

We urge the people of Korea to work together in peace to realize their aspirations. Since the end of the cold war peace on the peninsula has needlessly been under threat on a number of occasions.

On the question of Western Sahara, we maintain our confidence in the power of direct dialogue, under the auspices of this Organization, as the best means by which the Settlement Plan can be revived to enable the Sahrawi people to exercise their right to self-determination, through a free, fair and impartial referendum. The news that the Secretary-General's personal envoy, in the worthy person of His Excellency Mr. James Baker III, has succeeded in brokering a compromise agreement through such direct talks is reassuring, and we hope that very soon, this long, drawn-out conflict will be amenable to successful resolution.

May I also avail myself of this opportunity to express my Government's regret that the Middle East peace process has been put in grave jeopardy by the actions of the Israeli Government, which, defying international outcry, continues its settlement activities in East Jerusalem. For these are the very actions which encourage extremists among the Palestinians to organize terrorist acts against the Israeli population. We would also urge the Palestinian leadership to continue more assiduously in its efforts to achieve the objectives of their treaty with Israel through non-confrontational means.

Many a representative has drawn attention to the continued and widespread growth of the global economy

as we move towards the close of the century and to the broadening of the reach of economic growth in developing countries to include an increasing number of low-income countries. Indeed, many African countries have achieved stronger growth of output and incomes in 1996 and 1997. This encouraging trend has been achieved through the adoption and pursuit by Governments of policies and measures aimed at ensuring, among others, macroeconomic stability, inflows of foreign direct investment, open and free markets and stable and transparent legal and regulatory frameworks.

However, it is pertinent also to point out that despite these efforts, many African countries, and especially the least developed countries, continue to face important policy challenges, particularly in the areas of enhancing resource mobilization and allocation, strengthening savings and investment and financing development. The difficulties inherent in these challenges are compounded by the adverse impact of globalization and liberalization. These countries have not participated in, nor benefited from, globalization. On the contrary, they have become even more marginalized in the global economy for the very simple reason that they lack the physical, financial and human resources as well as the institutional infrastructure necessary for effective competition and integration in the international markets.

In specific terms our countries, despite various structural reforms, have been unable to attract in sufficient quantities the necessary capital inflows for investment, and are confronted at the same time with domestic supply-side constraints which limit our export potential, an unsustainable debt which swallows a great part of our national income, and declining levels of official development assistance, among others. The "prosperity-poverty" gap, or gulf, between the haves and the have-nots is ever more yawning.

Under these circumstances, what we need is a new development strategy based on genuine partnership between the developed and developing countries and which takes a holistic view of development, combining within itself all the tools of development, including trade and investment as well as official development assistance and South/South cooperation. Such a strategy will also necessitate the democratization of international relations, particularly in the economic sphere; the establishment of open, equitable and transparent international regimes; the creation of fair opportunities for all; and the protection of the weakest members of our community.

It is in this context that we welcome the successful conclusion and adoption of the Agenda for Development, which is intended to serve as an initial framework for renewing and strengthening the partnership for development on the basis of mutual benefits and genuine interdependence. While acknowledging and affirming our commitment to the primacy of national policies and measures to achieve our development goals, we wish to stress the importance of the fulfilment by all parties of the global commitments aimed at supplementing national efforts. In this connection, we express the hope that the commitments and internationally agreed targets reached at recent major United Nations conferences will be fully implemented by all parties. It is also our view that the United Nations must be strengthened and adequately equipped to carry out its important role in development.

In seeking to achieve our goals, we the countries of the developing world need to cooperate more among ourselves as a means of strengthening our self-reliance and complementing international development cooperation. We therefore need to strive to enhance cooperation at all levels — bilateral, subregional, regional and interregional — in the important areas of trade, investment, finance, science and technology, environment, human resources development, and information and communications. This, in the view of my delegation, will constitute an important strategy for facilitating the effective participation of developing countries in the global economy.

The review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 last June revealed worsening trends for sustainable development, as well as the continued deterioration of the state of the global environment as a result of the failure of the international community to fulfil the commitments it undertook in 1992. This is a sad state of affairs. But even sadder still was the failure of the review session to make any significant progress on the critical issues of Agenda 21, owing to the unwillingness of Member States to establish time-bound and quantified commitments. It is absolutely necessary that we all recommit ourselves to the global partnership established at Rio in 1992 and to the fulfilment of the obligations voluntarily assumed under Agenda 21.

Ghana has in various forums indicated its support for the establishment of an international criminal court. We are gratified that the Preparatory Committee for the establishment of the Court made significant progress in that direction at its last two sessions. We hope that with the same determination and spirit of compromise which

has characterized the work of the Preparatory Committee since its inception, the establishment of the Court will soon become a reality. We wish to recognize the useful contributions of the various non-governmental organizations which have worked closely with governmental delegations on several difficult aspects of the proposed international criminal court.

Progress on the Law of the Sea also deserves mention. With the establishment of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, all institutions envisaged by the Convention have now been put in place. It is our hope that adequate resources will be made available to these institutions to enable them fully to attain the objectives for which they were set up. It is also our hope that cooperation between the appropriate United Nations agencies and developing countries in the sphere of the Law of the Sea will be intensified to enable developing countries fully to utilize the benefits conferred on them by the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The critical financial situation of the Organization is a major source of concern to my delegation, as it places our Organization in jeopardy at a time of challenge and of opportunity to promote the objectives and purposes of the Organization. It is regrettable that a number of countries, including some of the largest contributors, are neither paying their contributions nor making good on their arrears, while some even wittingly aggravate the situation by attaching unacceptable conditions or benchmarks to the discharge of their Charter obligations in this regard. My delegation strongly believes that support for the United Nations must be demonstrated not only by an eagerness to promote reforms but more importantly by the willingness of Member States to pay all their assessed contributions promptly, fully and unconditionally to ensure that the Organization is financially sound and can meet its mandates and other commitments.

Ted Turner, an individual with no obligation whatsoever to support the United Nations, has demonstrated support in a dramatic and yet effective manner. He has offered to pay the United Nations \$1 billion over 10 years. What excuse has any country got, then, to say, "We will not pay", or "We will pay only if ..."? On behalf of His Excellency the President of Ghana and of the people of Ghana, I say thank you to Ted Turner for showing us the way, for pricking our consciences and for being such a good citizen of the world.

Today at the fifty-second session, perhaps more so than ever before, the General Assembly is confronted with

the complex problem of the reform of our Organization. On the threshold of a new millennium, the United Nations cannot continue to conduct its business as usual. It has to adopt bold and imaginative measures to overhaul its structure and working methods with a view to removing the obstacles that impede its effectiveness not only as an instrument for promoting international peace and security but also as an indispensable agent for resolving the world's socio-economic problems.

It is in this context that Ghana has carefully studied the Secretary-General's wide-ranging and far-reaching proposals presented to Member States for their consideration and reaction. We warmly congratulate the Secretary-General on his bold initiative. The Secretary-General has thrown a momentous challenge to all of us, and we should do everything possible to measure up to the test by manifesting the necessary breadth of vision and objectivity of outlook. The United Nations remains the only international body available to us in our search for peace, progress and prosperity as well as in the resolution of differences among nations.

For us as a nation, we are particularly interested in the new sense of purpose and dynamism that the proposals seek to inject into United Nations development activities to make them more coherent and output-oriented. We support the setting up of an effective machinery to study the various proposals and how to implement them, and we stand ready to participate in any such effort.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Lena Hjelm-Wallén, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Mrs. Hjelm-Wallén (Sweden): I sincerely congratulate the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly, a most crucial task which I trust he will execute in a most productive and creative manner.

Let me also record my admiration and praise for the way in which his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, performed his demanding mission during the whole of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. He laid a unique foundation on the basis of which we must now make advances towards a better United Nations.

I refer to the statement made yesterday by the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg on behalf of all

members of the European Union; my Government fully subscribes to that statement.

On the threshold of the new millennium, profound changes are affecting the lives of nations and individuals. Many are benefitting from open international relations. Others feel marginalized politically and economically. And all too many countries are still threatened by persistent poverty, social injustice and domestic strife.

We need a strong United Nations to counter these forces, which separate nations and tear them apart. We need a renewed United Nations to focus on the tasks for which it was established, and to meet the new challenges of today and of tomorrow.

This is why we need fundamental United Nations reform: not piecemeal improvements, but major change. This is why Sweden wholeheartedly endorses the reform proposals presented by the Secretary-General. We give our support as an active participant in all spheres of United Nations activity and as a major contributor to its development funds and programmes.

United Nations reform is not a cost-cutting exercise. Its aim must be to make the Organization strong, effective and efficient, focusing on its core activities and ready to meet its future challenges. The Swedish Government supports the proposal that efficiency savings should be used for development.

The United Nations cannot be reformed under the threat of political and financial crisis. It is simply not acceptable that Member States should set conditions for fulfilling Charter obligations. The Swedish Government urges all debtors — including the main debtor, the United States — to settle their accounts before the end of this year and to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

Securing a sound and viable financial basis must be an integral part of reform efforts. The idea of establishing a revolving credit fund could be considered as an emergency step. We should also enact measures to reverse the current trend of late payment. Article 19 of the Charter should be applied more strictly. It is also time to agree on a new scale of assessments based on capacity to pay. A realistic proposal has been presented by the European Union.

We, the Member States, should provide political direction for the reform process. We should take an overall view of United Nations reform, and avoid getting trapped

in details. We are fully aware that there will be further steps: reform is a process, not a one-time event.

Today, I will emphasize the need to strengthen and reform the United Nations in four key areas: peace and security, sustainable development, human rights, and disarmament.

First, the United Nations must be strengthened and reformed to effectively prevent and settle armed conflicts. This is the purpose for which the Organization was established. This is where success or failure will ultimately be determined. Long-term prevention should address the root causes of conflict: poverty, social injustice, oppression and violations of human rights. The United Nations world conferences have established the close relationship between security and development. The United Nations must continue to build on this political platform.

Conflict prevention is a task which requires coordinated action by the United Nations system as a whole, including the international financial organizations, and also by non-governmental organizations. Cooperation at the regional and subregional levels is increasingly important for building a security environment based on common values and norms.

It is equally urgent to strengthen the ability of the United Nations to act on the threat of an erupting conflict. The whole range of United Nations instruments, including those mentioned in Article 33 of the Charter, should be developed and used to their full potential. Sweden wishes to cooperate with other Member States to enhance the United Nations capacity for early warning and early action. The new generation of peacekeeping operations must combine political, military, humanitarian and civilian United Nations action, and strike the right balance between various forms of response. The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator plays a key role in fostering a response to humanitarian crises. This should lay the groundwork for post-conflict reconstruction and long-term recovery of war-torn nations.

The Swedish Government supports efforts to set up a rapidly deployable mission headquarters within the United Nations. Together with Austria, Canada, Denmark and Norway, we are creating the multinational Stand-by Forces High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) to enhance the United Nations capacity for rapid deployment. In many situations United Nations civilian police can help prevent conflict and restore ravaged societies. I therefore

appreciated the opportunity I had, during Sweden's presidency of the Security Council in July, to deliver a presidential statement on civilian police in peacekeeping operations. It calls on Member States to make qualified police quickly available to the United Nations through better and standardized training.

We need a global security architecture: a web of organizations capable of dealing quickly with a wide range of threats and potential conflicts. Regional organizations will further gain in importance. But the primary and overall responsibility remains with the United Nations. Conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace-building and humanitarian action to protect the victims of conflicts have to be at the core of United Nations reform efforts. But the decisive factor will not be the instruments with which we equip the Organization, but rather our willingness to use them, to pay for them and to accept the authority of the United Nations.

My second theme is that the United Nations must be strengthened and reformed to combat poverty and promote sustainable development. Fighting poverty, supporting sustainable development and promoting economic integration are part of the Organization's mandate as set out in the Charter. Sweden sees this crucial task as being in its own best interest. Our own development has benefited much from the multilateralism of this century.

The Swedish Government wholeheartedly supports the proposals of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations in the economic and social fields. We want an empowered and capable United Nations. We want a unified United Nations presence in the field so that the United Nations system can be a reliable and flexible partner for developing countries. We want long-term commitments from donors and more equitable burden-sharing for financing development.

Sweden is one of the four countries fulfilling the United Nations aid target. Over a three-year period, by the year 2000, we undertake to further increase our aid budget, challenging the international trend. In spite of a few difficult years, we have kept up our voluntary contributions to the multilateral system. In the coming years we foresee increases. To support debt relief for the poorest countries the Swedish Government will contribute 295 million Swedish Krona to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative.

One of the greatest challenges facing the international community in the coming years will be to achieve global

sustainable development. The industrialized countries must take the lead and learn how to do more with less input of resources and energy. Our goal should be to use energy and raw materials 10 times more efficiently. In our efforts to combat climate change, the developed countries should, this December in Kyoto, agree to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

My third theme is that the United Nations must be strengthened and reformed to protect and promote human rights. Sweden applauds the Secretary-General's steps to integrate human rights into all United Nations activities. We welcome the appointment of the distinguished Mrs Mary Robinson as High Commissioner for Human Rights. Next year the United Nations will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This historic document establishes the individual as a subject in international relations, with her or his own rights and aspirations. Violations of human rights are a legitimate concern for the international community.

The Human Rights Year 1998 will be an opportunity for celebration, but also for critical assessment. We should reform human rights machinery and strengthen assistance in this field. The implementation of international human rights standards must be improved. Public information and fact-finding on human rights violations are crucial. It is particularly important to expose any attempt by Governments to silence those who bravely stand up in defence of human rights and basic humanitarian principles in their own countries.

Sweden will continue to work hard to combat torture. We will stand firm in our rejection of the death penalty, wherever practised. It is an abhorrent practice, unworthy of our times.

Cooperation must be enhanced to eradicate sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking in children and women. Governments need to take firm action against discrimination based on gender, ethnic origin or religious belief.

Next year's diplomatic conference will be a milestone in the decades-long endeavour to establish an international criminal court. The court will play a crucial role in closing the gap of impunity for those who commit genocide, serious war crimes and systematic or large-scale human rights violations.

My fourth and last theme is that the United Nations must be strengthened and reformed to build security

through disarmament. Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are central features of any policy aimed at preventing conflict, promoting peace and fostering economic and social development. They must become fully integrated elements in a coordinated policy for peace-building.

The 1990s have seen impressive progress towards disarmament, but much work lies ahead. The international political and security climate now offers a historic opportunity. It must be fully translated into concrete actions.

It is imperative that the quest for a nuclear-weapon-free world continue. Sweden urges the Russian Federation to ratify the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks II (START II), enabling the conclusion of START III. This should pave the way for further reductions, on the part of all nuclear-weapon States, with a view to the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, in accordance with Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons has proposed a series of measures to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons. Its report merits in-depth consideration in international disarmament forums. Let me focus on two timely aspects.

The Commission proposes that nuclear forces should be taken off alert and that warheads be removed from their delivery vehicles. I urge the United States and Russia to apply these measures without delay to all strategic weapons covered by START II, and subsequently by START III.

Nuclear-weapon-free States have a legitimate right to assurances that they will not be attacked or threatened by nuclear weapons. The time has come to elaborate a legally binding instrument under the NPT, giving such assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States Parties.

Conventional arms — especially light weaponry — are at the heart of today's conflicts. They aggravate tensions, provoke and prolong wars and inflict human suffering — sometimes long after ceasefires and peace settlements. The flow of conventional arms to areas of tension and conflict must be stemmed. I welcome the high priority given to such objectives in the Secretary-General's reform programme. There is a need for export control of conventional arms as well as of dual-use products. International cooperation in this field and the demand for an international code of conduct for arms transfers are matters of high priority for the Swedish Government.

From a humanitarian point of view, anti-personnel landmines are in a category of their own: indiscriminate by nature, crippling innocent children, women, men and nations. I am proud to say that Sweden was the first State to propose a total ban on this terrible type of weapon. I warmly welcome the Oslo agreement on a convention on such a ban. I urge all States to accede to it. We must now make every effort to achieve universal adherence to this ban.

Reform is necessary to build a stronger and more relevant United Nations. I have outlined some major aspects from Sweden's point of view. As I have emphasized, but must not look at United Nations reform in isolation, we must consider why we need the Organization and what it can do for all of us through all of us.

Today's international environment is rife with contradictions. We have a globalized economy, but we also have a periphery unable to benefit, and left further and further behind. We have ever closer international cooperation, but we also have aggressive nationalism and xenophobia. We have growing support for democracy and human rights, but we also have atrocities and blatant disregard for international law.

In this situation, the purpose of the United Nations should be precisely what is spelled out in its name and its Charter: to unite nations and people.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Latorre. I give him the floor.

Mr. Latorre (Dominican Republic) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the Dominican Republic and its President Mr. Leonel Fernandez Reyna, I wish to convey to our President our warmest congratulations on his well deserved election to preside over this fifty-second session of the General Assembly, at a time when the Organization is taking important steps forward in its restructuring and modernization in order to meet the challenges of peace and economic and social development for our nations.

Our delegation pays tribute to the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, for his outstanding conduct of the deliberations during the last session of the General Assembly.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his assiduity, dedication and hard work in guiding the Organization down a road of reform and modernization that will make it stronger for the new millennium.

While remaining faithful to the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter — the maintenance of international peace and security, cooperation for economic, social and cultural development, defence of human rights, and humanitarian assistance — the United Nations should also promote and pursue a reform process which takes into account the many changes that have taken place in a complex international scene. That scene is marked by the end of ideological confrontations and, at the same time, by increasing levels of poverty and ethnic and religious tension, phenomena that pose a threat to our supreme objectives of peace and development for our peoples.

The trend within the Organization in recent years to the establishment of working groups, as well as the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", reflect the strong resolve of Member States to engage in a negotiation and consultation process that could, once their distrust of the past is overcome, culminate in far-reaching changes in the various United Nations bodies. The Dominican Republic attaches special importance to the ongoing reform process, given that it is capable, while respecting the principles and purposes that gave birth to the Organization, of ensuring a more democratic, transparent, representative and efficient system capable of facing the current challenges, especially those of peace and the problems of poverty that affect the peoples of the world.

In this regard, the strengthening of the General Assembly, the main forum in which Member States are represented, cannot be postponed. It is imperative to promote a process of better coordination between the Assembly and the Security Council, so that the Assembly can be properly informed, and hence make better recommendations to the Security Council.

Aware of the need to strengthen the United Nations, the Dominican Republic calls on this forum to adopt resolutions that can return to the Assembly its capacity as the governing body of the Organization. In this regard, we welcome the proposals of the Secretary-General designed to focus the work of the Assembly on the highest-priority issues and to reduce the duration of its sessions as well as the number of agenda items, so as to allow for their in-depth study.

This reorientation should not interfere with the principle of sovereign equality, nor with the plural and universal character that the Organization has maintained over the more than half a century of its existence. Reaffirmation of the democratic principles contained in the Charter must constitute the basis for the current reform process.

The Dominican Republic proposes the establishment of mechanisms and working methods that would enable the Assembly to allow reasonable time for making progress on resolving certain conflicts. The problems of peace, security and development are multiple and complex. However, the commitment of the international community expressed in the United Nations should go beyond merely recalling them each year.

The aspect of the reform of the Organization that has raised the greatest debate is the one relating to the restructuring and enlargement of the Security Council. Our country hopes that these reforms will promote greater participation by the membership as a whole. Thus, with a more democratic base and a just and equitable selection process, the Council would be in a better position to meet its purposes and objectives. In this regard, the Dominican Republic proposes the expansion of the Security Council from the current 15 to 25 members. This represents less than 14 per cent of the total number of United Nations Member States, whereas in 1945 the figure was slightly above 20 per cent.

The Dominican Republic, a founding member of the United Nations, has not yet been a member of the Security Council. In this new phase of its international relations it has a strong interest in participating actively in bodies such as the Security Council and thus making a direct contribution to the maintenance of peace, on which depends the very existence of nations.

An encouraging sign in the proposal of the Secretary-General is that the reforms are constantly related to the achievement of the founding principles of the Organization, as expressed in the Charter. Thus, the results of reform will be assessed primarily not on the basis of the relationship of costs to benefits, but rather on how they facilitate the realization of the Organization's objectives.

Our country supports the restructuring of the Organization as long as it promotes more transparent, clearer and more coherent mandates and is directed towards finding lasting solutions to the problems of

hunger, underdevelopment, extreme poverty and social injustice, not forgetting the mandates related to peacekeeping.

Allow me to refer to the issue of development. The increase in global poverty and the gap between rich and poor countries is today the crucial problem for the international community. Poverty has a negative impact on progress with regard to peace and security, human rights and the strengthening of democratic systems. We must address forthwith the challenge posed by the tremendous economic and social instability of a large number of countries.

The Dominican delegation associates itself with the declarations of the Group of 77 adopted in July of this year, at the twenty-second meeting of the group coordinators, because we support strengthening the role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for social and economic development. And we are in favour of measures that will promote the formulation and coordination of policies and the provision of technical assistance to developing countries.

Our country is making serious efforts to position itself favourably in the world economy and to prepare for globalization. For this purpose, it is currently conducting major economic, monetary, tariff and judicial reforms, while at the same time negotiating free-trade agreements with countries of the region. Also, together with other countries, it is formulating strategies to take advantage of funds from multilateral sources.

The achievements of regional groups such as the Central American Common Market, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Andean Group and the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), among others, are indications of the strong willingness of the Member States to expand their capacities and reduce the negative impact that the new rules of international trade have on our economies and societies.

Aware of the commitment to promote at the regional level mechanisms for improving economic growth and combating poverty, the Dominican Republic has in the past year strengthened its relations with the countries of CARICOM and Central America, primarily through the participation of our President in the meetings of heads of State and Government. We are pleased to announce that our country will host the next summit meeting of Central America, Belize and the Dominican Republic and that negotiations for the establishment of a free-trade area

between CARICOM and the Dominican Republic should be concluded by the end of this year.

At this time allow me to welcome very enthusiastically the initiatives of the group of Central American countries designed to strengthen Central American unity. It is precisely these efforts that have given us faith and confidence in the future of our peoples.

During this year, the Dominican Republic has developed a programme for strengthening our links with our neighbouring country, Haiti. For the first time, bi-national joint commissions are crossing the border to find, through dialogue, areas of mutual interest and solutions to some of the problems common to both countries.

Regarding our sister Republic of Haiti, we insist on the need for the international community to discharge effectively the economic commitment it made in 1994 with regard to Haiti's economic recovery and development. The peacekeeping efforts in Haiti, which we have promoted in the United Nations, will not be sufficient to achieve democratic stability unless they are accompanied by resources directed to alleviating the great economic and social problems affecting that nation.

We must again emphasize how external debt is weighing down our economies. The onerous costs of debt-servicing hinder our investing more in our peoples, thus deepening the levels of poverty. For the Dominican Republic, the payment of outstanding debts and the interest on them represents nearly 20 per cent of the national budget. As a means of promoting development and social investment projects to combat poverty, we wish to propose to this Assembly that it take the necessary actions to reduce the burden of the external debt in those developing countries that have demonstrated a high level of responsibility in handling their debt.

We reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to develop efficient measures for the struggle against poverty. Along with peacekeeping, development cooperation must constitute an overarching goal of the Organization. No financing of activities for peacekeeping, the defence of human rights or humanitarian actions will be sufficient if we do not act responsibly in undertaking multilateral cooperation for development.

The proposal to unify the various programmes of the United Nations devoted to development seems to us to be a very important step towards the effective coordination of intersectoral policies, concentrating strategies and

development operations in a United Nations Development Group. These initiatives must reorient resources toward areas of priority and achieve better coordination with international funding organizations.

Allow me to express the position of my country regarding the evolution of the international situation. Peace is still among the highest aspiration of our peoples. Different points of the planet are currently involved in bloody conflicts which affect common citizens. Security is today not only a matter of the survival of political regimes, but is linked to the very existence of human beings and nature.

The Dominican Republic expresses its solidarity with the many conventions of the international community devoted to eradicating corruption, terrorism, drug trafficking and money laundering. These evils disrupt the lives of our peoples, erode our institutions and prevent the strengthening of democracy.

We reiterate our conviction regarding the defence of democratic principles and institutionality. In this regard, my country is making tremendous efforts to reform and modernize the State and the judicial system. Establishing means of promoting a transparent public administration, controlling all forms of administrative corruption, is among the ongoing processes in our nation. Dialogue and the search for consensus among the branches of the State and between the executive branch and civil society have become the polestar of public administration of the Dominican Government.

The Dominican Republic welcomes and associates itself with the measures taken by the United Nations to extend the presence of the peacekeeping forces in Haiti. Their presence, we believe, strengthens the possibilities for democratic stability and will allow the people to take sure steps on the road towards consolidating the country's democracy.

We stress the need for a definitive and peaceful solution to the conflict in the Balkans, and we call upon the international community to strengthen its efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. The crisis in that region, which has deteriorated in recent months, demands special attention. We call for respect for all the agreements signed in recent years in order to restore peace in the region.

With regard to the Republic of China on Taiwan, the Dominican Republic reiterates its position as presented by our President, Dr. Leonel Fernandez Reyna, regarding the

need for the international community to consider the importance of that country, owing to its geographical location and given the fact that security and stability are of great significance for the peace and prosperity of the region. We call for a constructive dialogue between the two sides of the Strait of Taiwan in search of mutual understanding and cooperation. We reiterate that parallel participation of both countries in the United Nations would contribute to the maintenance of peace.

Our country supports the efforts under way in various international conferences in Brussels, Oslo, and very soon in Ottawa, regarding the process to achieve a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. The commitment to peace is a commitment to life. The international community has an obligation to promote peace and to defend life in all situations and circumstances.

The Dominican Republic, traditionally a peace-oriented nation, does not produce or consume nuclear energy for military purposes; it utilizes such energy for peaceful purposes. In this spirit, the Dominican President signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty during his visit to the United Nations last year.

Various international conferences are currently discussing conventions on the use of nuclear energy. One of them is the convention to regulate the harm caused to persons and the environment by radioactive waste. The Dominican Republic depends to a large extent on tourism, a tourism of beaches and sun. The quality of our coastal waters is vital for the sector's development, and any international radioactivity-related damage can mean the collapse of this important sector of our economy. We appeal to the good judgement of the international community to preserve our natural resources.

We reaffirm our commitment to the protection of the environment and natural resources. In this spirit, our country has acceded to the United Nations International Convention to Combat Desertification.

The Dominican Republic reiterates its commitment to defending and protecting human rights. In this connection, it welcomes the efforts made by the United Nations to concentrate the activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. During this year we have had the satisfaction of receiving two international missions on human rights, invited by our Government. A High-Level Mission of the Inter-American Committee on Human Rights (ICHR), of the Organization of American States,

visited the country in June, and a mission of the Committee of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations, with headquarters in Geneva, is in the country at this very moment. These visits indicate the Government's interest in ensuring transparency of action to defend and protect human rights in the Dominican Republic.

Allow me to refer to the situation of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. Our country wishes to reiterate the mandate given in Economic and Social Council resolution 1979/11 of 9 May 1979, in which it is clearly and explicitly stated that the headquarters of the Institute would be established in the Dominican Republic, a developing country.

The objectives that led to the creation of the Institute are still valid today. Research and training for the purpose of creating new ways for women to contribute to the development of their countries, in the light of women's needs, are a priority. This concern was manifested at the Beijing Conference of 1995 and in the Platform for Action to follow up the agreements reached in that important forum.

In order to cooperate with the United Nations, the Dominican Government not only donated the building housing the Institute but also invested large amounts of money to renovate the building and adapt it to the Institute's needs. This explains our surprise when, in 1993, the United Nations Secretariat proposed the merger of the Institute and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), without prior consultation with our Government and ignoring the headquarters agreement. However, in 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women, in its Beijing Platform for Action, confirmed the Institute's mandate.

We hope that in the process of United Nations reform all the mandates approved by the Member States will be equally respected, since these States bear sole responsibility for renewing or changing decisions adopted by the General Assembly.

Lastly, we welcome the summoning of Member States to reflect on and endorse these transformations in our world Organization. The Assembly of the millennium proposed to us for the year 2000 would be an unprecedented forum for evaluating what we have done on the road to these reforms and for reiterating our tremendous faith and trust in the future of the generations of the twenty-first century.

At this fifty-second session of the General Assembly we are faced with the historic responsibility of giving greater reality to our hopes and expectations for a better future for humankind. The changes in those realities are taking place faster than the changes in the structures we have given ourselves for dealing with them. We have a unique opportunity to ensure that the reforms of the Organization respond to the expectations of a United Nations that is in line with the needs of the new age.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, His Excellency Mr. Venancio de Moura.

Mr. de Moura (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): On behalf of the Republic of Angola, allow me first to congratulate the President, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, on his election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

Allow me also to congratulate the outgoing President, Ambassador Razali Ismail, on the excellent work he performed.

We should also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedication and determination in turning the United Nations into a more effective instrument to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The cold war, which was the main obstacle that for decades prevented the United Nations from performing its role fully, a role defined by its founding Members in the Charter, is now a thing of the past. But our world Organization has not yet achieved the degree of efficiency that the Member countries and their people would desire, with the result that sometimes despair and a lack of confidence are felt, instead of trust in its efforts.

The construction of the new democratic world order to which we all aspire will demand that the principal forum for multilateral diplomacy, the United Nations, play a greater role. In this context, the complete restructuring and revitalization of its system and an end to the present financial crisis, which is affecting its normal functioning, are essential.

The issue of the restructuring of the Security Council should therefore be given priority. The current structure of that body is obsolete, reflecting a reality that prevailed more than 50 years ago. How is it conceivable that

regions such as the African continent, which makes up the largest regional group at the United Nations, or Latin America, are not represented among the permanent Members of the Security Council? Therefore, it is high time that the geographical composition of that body be overhauled to allow for more balanced and more equitable representation. In this regard, Angola endorses the African claim for no fewer than two seats among the permanent members of the Security Council. The Council's working methods should also be revised in order to ensure greater transparency in its decision-making processes.

Angola supports the declaration made by the Heads of State of the Organization of African Unity, as well as the statement made by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the non-aligned countries on reform of the Security Council.

The recent proposals made by the Secretary-General on reform will certainly boost the process of overhauling the United Nations. Angola welcomes the contents of those proposals, although we would have preferred to see further improvements in some aspects. We are, however, optimistic as to the outcome.

As the Assembly is aware, the Lusaka Protocol which was signed in 1994 between the Government and the armed opposition, UNITA, was intended to solve the post-electoral crisis provoked by UNITA and at the same time to put the country back on the path towards peace, national reconciliation and democracy. However, approximately three years since the beginning of its implementation, Angola is still far from achieving those goals due to the systematic failures by UNITA to meet its obligations and to its repeated delaying tactics. This is a clear demonstration of bad faith and lack of political will by its leadership. It appears that the leader of this organization has not abandoned its strategy of taking power by force. He is still resisting the transformation of UNITA into a true political party and UNITA's complete demilitarization, even though the single national army, which includes in its ranks thousands of men provided by UNITA, has already been formed.

UNITA still maintains a private, heavily armed army made up of around 35,000 men, 4,000 of whom belong to the UNITA leader's personal guard. This constitutes a serious violation of the Lusaka Protocol and is the main cause of the current climate of tension and insecurity in some parts of Angola. The members of this army include troops that UNITA hid from the United Nations during the quartering process, recently demobilized UNITA troops

who have been recruited again by force, and former soldiers of the former Republic of Zaire.

At the same time, UNITA is still continuing its military build-up through the reactivation of military bases and acquisition of sophisticated weapons from foreign countries, in clear contradiction of paragraph 19 of Security Council resolution 864 (1993).

On the other hand, UNITA is holding on to large portions of national territory which were supposed to be handed over to government administration. This is impeding exercise of the State's sovereignty throughout the country and the free movement of people and goods. The control of some of these areas is aimed at exploring for, and then smuggling and exploiting, their natural resources to finance UNITA's war machinery and satisfy the individual interests of its leadership.

As a result of these actions, the perspectives created with the inauguration of the Government of National Unity and Reconciliation and the swearing-in of the Parliament have been postponed.

UNITA's behaviour in the peace process is repugnant as well as ambiguous. It insists on armed opposition despite the fact that it is part of the main power institutions and despite the fact that Angola has a democratic, pluralist system in which all political parties can freely carry out their activities.

The international community has already expressed, repeatedly and categorically, its condemnation of and dismay at UNITA's actions. In 1993 the Security Council applied the first package of restrictive measures against UNITA. More recently, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1127 (1997), which applies a new package of measures against UNITA as a result of its lack of cooperation in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. The position taken by the Council above all displays the concern of the international community and its determination to prevent the UNITA leadership strategy from being implemented. Otherwise, peace and stability in Angola and the entire region of central and southern Africa would be at risk.

The Government of Angola reiterates its firm support for resolution 1127 (1997), because we feel that it is a strong means of pressure aimed at dissuading UNITA from its intention to return to war, encouraging it to speed up its demilitarization and transformation into

a political party, and put an end to its jurisdiction over parts of Angolan territory.

Taking the above into account, the Angolan people look forward to the Security Council's demonstrating firmness and determination in implementing resolution 1127 (1997), immediately putting into force sanctions against UNITA unless that organization changes its behaviour and gives proof of good faith in complying with its outstanding obligations.

The Government of Angola is optimistic about the successful conclusion of the peace process and will continue to do its utmost to guarantee the full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol.

Before turning to another subject, I would like to express the sincerest gratitude of the Government of Angola to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Angola, Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye, and to the Governments of the troika of observers, Portugal, Russia and the United States, for their untiring efforts to bring about peace in Angola.

Recent changes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have contributed to alleviating the tensions in the central African region, opening new perspectives for its States and peoples in terms of stability and development.

The present climate will allow stability to prevail in the region and will allow for better coordination among States with a view to reinforcing the observance of the principle of good neighbourliness.

The Angolan Government is very apprehensive regarding the crisis in the Republic of the Congo, a country with which Angola shares a common border, close consanguinity and historic ties.

The Republic of Angola favours a negotiated solution to the crisis and supports the international mediation efforts headed by Mr. Omar Bongo, President of the Republic of Gabon. Our Government also supports the deployment of an international force as soon as a political settlement emerges from the negotiations.

In Sierra Leone, we deplore the interruption of the democratic process and the overthrow of the legitimately elected institutions. The Government of Angola supports the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and, in particular, of neighbouring countries to restore the democratic institutions.

We are also concerned with the situation in the Republic of the Comoros, where tensions are threatening the country's independence and territorial integrity. We encourage the international community to support the efforts of the OAU in the search for a peaceful solution able to preserve the territorial integrity and independence of that country.

The situation in Somalia continues to deteriorate, and a solution acceptable to all the parties concerned has yet to be found. The Angolan Government approves of the efforts made by member countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and, in particular, the most recent initiatives of Ethiopia in bringing the representatives of the Somali factions together at the negotiating table.

Of particular concern to us is the ostracism displayed in the main international forums with regard to the Somali crisis.

In Western Sahara the recent opening of direct negotiations between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO front is a positive sign. The Angolan Government has always been in favour of a negotiated solution to the conflict which takes into account the aspirations of the populations of the territory and encourages the parties to honour the agreements signed in Houston and to continue the ongoing dialogue in good faith. In this connection, we support the joint efforts of the OAU and the United Nations.

We are concerned with the continuation of the Israeli-Arab conflict, the primary cause of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East. Recent events have delayed the peace process and have led to further deterioration of the situation in the region. Angola reaffirms its support for the peace process in the Middle East. Its success depends upon the reinforcement of mutual trust and the full implementation of the accords signed between the parties concerned.

We endorse the position expressed in the Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the OAU and the statement made in New Delhi at the ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement with regard to the question of Palestine.

My Government expresses its concern at the lack of progress in the initiatives to bring about a just solution to the question of East Timor. The Government of Angola

deplores the refusal by one of the parties to accept President Mandela's initiative.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba is a matter of concern to my Government, particularly because of its negative impact on the economic and social situation of the Cuban people. We reiterate our appeal to have the embargo lifted, which will contribute to relations between two peoples.

(spoke in English)

Finally, I should like to thank those who have given me the opportunity to speak today. As the Assembly knows, my speech was to be delivered on 26 September. However, due to a sad event which has happened in my country, I have to leave tonight, and I was obliged to ask the Assembly to give me the opportunity to deliver my speech today.

One of our colleagues, the former of Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, passed away yesterday. It is my duty to return home to pay my respects to my dear colleague. Many here know Foreign Minister "Loy".

I wish the Assembly well, and may good work be done here for peace, stability and international cooperation.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to express sincere condolences to the Government of Angola on the death of their brother, who spoke here at the General Assembly in years past.

We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I would like to remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): I would like to speak briefly in response to the remarks made today by the Foreign Minister of Argentina concerning the Falkland Islands.

We welcome the Foreign Minister's references to the high level of cooperation between the United Kingdom and Argentina which characterizes our bilateral relationship. The

British Government sincerely hopes that the progress which has been achieved will be built on and developed.

But the British Government does not accept the Foreign Minister's remarks about sovereignty. We have no doubt about Britain's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and over the other British dependencies in the South Atlantic.

In the Falkland Islands we must heed the wishes of the people. The elected representatives of the islanders, who visited the United Nations for the debate in the Committee of 24 in June this year, expressed their views clearly. They requested recognition that they, like any other democratic people, should be allowed to exercise the right of self-determination. As the democratic voice of the Falkland Islands people, they reiterated their view that they did not want to be part of Argentina.

Despite our differences with Argentina on the subject of sovereignty, we maintain a constructive dialogue with the Argentine Government on matters such as hydrocarbons development and fisheries in the South Atlantic. We continue to hold discussions on these issues on a regular basis while maintaining our position regarding sovereignty over the Falklands, and we value these practical steps to develop United Kingdom-Argentine cooperation. I hope both sides can leave it at that for today.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Republic of Argentina, having heard the statement of the representative of the United Kingdom, would like to reiterate the ideas expressed in the general debate this afternoon by the Foreign Minister of Argentina, Mr. Guido Di Tella.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.



General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

11th plenary meeting

Thursday, 25 September 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: The first speaker is Her Excellency Ms. Zdenka Kramplová, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia. I give her the floor.

Ms. Kramplová (Slovakia): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I also wish to thank your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his excellent work during the last session of the General Assembly.

The ongoing session of the General Assembly is crucial in terms of showing the capability of the United Nations to react adequately to changes in the global scene after the end of the cold war, mainly in connection with problems humankind faces on the eve of the new millennium. We all know that if the United Nations is to meet the expectations and needs of the new era, it must go through a process of reform. The Slovak Republic welcomes the Secretary-General's report (A/51/950) entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" and supports his endeavours to streamline the work of the Organization in order to achieve greater unity of purpose, strategic deployment of resources, coherence of efforts and flexibility in response.

The suggestions included in the Secretary-General's report reveal a firm determination to transform the United Nations into a centre which takes an active part in governing international relations, in accordance with its main principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Though one of the basic goals of the reform is to streamline the work of the Organization, along with cost-saving, the latter should not be the final goal of the reform, since this approach itself does not lead to the strengthening of the United Nations system. Any reform of the Organization which would lead to a weakening of its position is not acceptable.

The financing of the United Nations is necessarily an integral part of its reform, since continuation of the current financial crisis has a grave impact on the performance of the Organization. We believe the principle of honouring legal obligations — in this case, the payment of assessed contributions — should be a basis for any solution to be adopted, although we understand that a number of countries are in arrears to the Organization because their rates of assessment do not reflect their capacity to pay.

Slovakia belongs to a small group of countries — so-called good contributors — having paid its regular budget contributions in full and on time this year. With regard to our peacekeeping- budget assessment, the General Assembly decided to allocate Slovakia to group C of Member States for the period 1993 to 1996.



We continue to believe that there is no need to limit this decision strictly to such a short period. Speaking in terms of capacity to pay, Slovakia simply belongs to group C of the Member States. For this reason, the General Assembly should no longer postpone its decision on the permanent allocation of Slovakia to group C of the Member States for the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We expect that the General Assembly at its fifty-second session will take a decision confirming the permanent presence of Slovakia in this group. It was also on the understanding of the difficult financial situation of the United Nations that Slovakia, on the eve of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, paid in full its arrears to the peacekeeping budget for the period 1993-1996.

The maintenance of international peace and security remains one of the main priorities of the United Nations and peacekeeping operations are a key instrument available in this regard. As experience in recent years has shown, the ability to respond quickly with adequate mandate and means is a prerequisite to the successful completion of peacekeeping operations. The Slovak Republic fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts to build up the United Nations standby arrangement system and to establish a rapidly deployable mission headquarters team. We are ready to participate actively in this system while considering the allocation of appropriate means.

Post-conflict peace-building is of crucial importance should a conflict resolution achieve lasting results. In recent years, the reconstruction of a conflict-torn society has involved a variety of actions. Many actors have been engaged in this process while lacking integrated coordination. Therefore, we welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to make the Department of Political Affairs the focal point for defining objectives, criteria and operational guidelines in this regard, as well as his intention to strengthen the role of a special representative of the Secretary-General to be responsible for the implementation of peace-building initiatives in the field. At the same time, in our view, it is still necessary clearly to define the competence, interaction and feedback between the Department of Political Affairs and the special representative of the Secretary-General.

The contribution of the Slovak Republic to the work of the United Nations rests first of all upon the concrete fulfilment of the primary purposes of the Organization, such as the maintenance of international peace and security. Slovakia has been currently contributing its troops and military observers to the United Nations Transitional

Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) in Eastern Slavonia and to the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) in Angola. It also takes active part in the work of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, of which it became a member in April this year, and thus contributes to the improvement of the planning and control system of United Nations peacekeeping operations. On this occasion, I can state with full responsibility that the Slovak Republic is interested in and is ready to continue contributing to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Experience has proven that small and mid-size States are capable of bearing their part of the responsibility for stability and security in individual world regions. In this connection, the Government of the Slovak Republic has decided to present its candidature for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the term 2000-2001. We believe that the candidature of the Slovak Republic, which is not currently a member and has no representative in any of the principal United Nations organs, can win the support of the Member States in order to increase the representativeness and democratic nature of this body.

Along with the reform measures initiated and undertaken by the Secretary-General within his competence, a discussion of important issues that reside within the jurisdiction of Member States is under way. A number of stimulating as well as antagonistic opinions reflecting the complexity of the process have been formulated. The most evident example of this is the question of Security Council reform. It is in all our interests that the Security Council's composition and decision-making procedure reflect the significant changes that have taken place on the international political scene during the last three decades. The Security Council's reform should result in an enhancement of its legitimacy and representativeness, while maintaining its ability to react promptly.

In our view, a new geopolitical situation on the global scene should be reflected in a new concept of the Security Council. Apparently, a decisive part of the general membership is not ready for such a step and political circumstances have not sufficiently matured. At the same time, the efforts aimed at restructuring the Security Council within a predetermined timetable, even in the absence of a general agreement, might be counterproductive. Since Security Council reform is an extremely important and sensitive issue for the further

existence of the Organization, Slovakia prefers a continued and thorough discussion in this regard without an artificial acceleration of the whole process.

The change of priorities in international politics after the end of the cold war, in particular the utmost necessity to solve various socio-economic problems, seems to have shifted arms control and disarmament issues out of sight. Concerned about this negative trend, we feel that disarmament should again be given priority in the United Nations agenda.

Recently, the Slovak Republic, as a new member of the Conference on Disarmament, was honoured to chair that unique multilateral disarmament forum. We are convinced that the Conference on Disarmament must play a further, indispensable role in solving the most important issues of international security, stability, peace, arms control and disarmament.

Besides the opening of concrete negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for weapons and other explosive devices, we find especially important the question of a global and comprehensive ban of anti-personnel landmines. We understand the efforts to bring this issue to the Conference's agenda and the Ottawa process to be fully complementary. We highly appreciate the agreement on the text of the Ottawa convention reached recently in Oslo.

The Slovak Republic has been continuously engaged in a number of activities that contribute to the alleviation of the consequences of the use of anti-personnel landmines. Reflecting the provisions of the Ottawa convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, we would like to offer our assistance in mine-clearance programmes by putting at the United Nations disposal a mine-clearance unit that would follow up on the very successful performance of the Slovak Engineer Battalion in former Yugoslavia.

We welcomed with satisfaction the conclusions reached at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is important that the technical and formal approach to the work of the Preparatory Committee has been altered, thus establishing favourable conditions for the success of the Review Conference.

The Slovak Republic, which uses nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes, has supported all steps

designed to lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons. As one of the 44 countries needed to ensure the Convention's entry into force, the Slovak Republic is prepared to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) before the end of this year. I would also like to state that Slovakia has been honoured to chair the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization.

This year's entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention can undoubtedly be considered the most significant event in the field of disarmament. The Slovak Republic has been striving to strengthen the Convention through its active approach to the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We are proud to state that some of the Organization's inspectors were trained in facilities provided by the Slovak Republic. We are interested in continuing these activities in order to help the Organization fulfil its verification and preventive functions.

Support for economic and social progress is one of the basic missions of the United Nations. We welcome the creation of a new Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and we believe that this will lead to its further streamlining and efficient performance. The Organization is a unique forum that can facilitate close cooperation and partnership for development among Governments, civil society, the private sector and regional and global organizations.

The role of the Economic and Social Council, as set forth 50 years ago in the United Nations Charter, needs to be revised. In a time of changing social and economic-development philosophy, it is necessary to strengthen the policy-management and coordination roles of the Economic and Social Council, as well as its position in the macroeconomic-policy-coordination dialogue. The reform of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council and the rationalization of their structure, work and functions require, in our opinion, a careful approach, one to be taken with full respect for their autonomy while aiming at their further rationalization and consolidation. The steps taken so far by the Secretary-General in this field are pointing in the right direction.

Slovakia, as a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, devoted considerable attention to the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. Although the special session has not brought the expected results, we consider it an

important step in the global discussion on the strengthening of the principles of sustainable development.

We look forward with anticipation to the special session of the General Assembly on drugs. That session, which will be held next year, should yield concrete results with regard to combating the production of and trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. As we all know, drugs pose a real threat, mainly to younger generations.

Since the Slovak Republic's establishment as an independent State, it has been participating actively in the work of one of the most important multilateral development bodies, namely, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Slovakia has been a member of the UNDP Executive Board since 1993. The UNDP regional centre for Central and Eastern Europe was established in the Slovak capital, Bratislava, in June of this year. The creation of this centre is a concrete example of the achievement of United Nations reform, in this instance of UNDP's efforts for decentralization at the country level and cutting the burden of administrative costs. The centre's foundation has been actively supported by Slovakia, and use has been made of my country's advantageous position as a bridge between UNDP secretariat activities at Headquarters in New York and UNDP efforts in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region. We are convinced that the presence of the UNDP regional centre in Bratislava will enable Slovakia to be even more active in development cooperation within the United Nations development group.

Human rights are a matter of the highest priority among the activities of the United Nations. Slovakia stresses the need for the consistent implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions. In this regard we support the role of special rapporteurs appointed to selected countries where systematic human rights abuses occur. We acknowledge the results the special rapporteurs have achieved in this field.

The Slovak Republic supports the ambitious proposals for restructuring United Nations institutions dealing with human rights in order to create effective conditions for improved protection of human rights. In this connection, we consider it appropriate and necessary to harmonize the activities of the Commission on Human Rights with the work of the relevant expert committees established pursuant to international human rights treaties. At the same time, the Slovak Republic supports the creation of effective

conditions for tripartite cooperation among Governments, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

Human rights abuse has been the cause of a number of conflicts in many places on our planet, which are often followed by a humanitarian crisis on a massive scale. Women and children are the most fragile sectors of any afflicted population. We must not forget this fact while pursuing the purposes of the United Nations.

I believe that the United Nations reform process will be successfully completed in next few years. I find the Secretary-General's programme for reform to be an important step in this regard. The Slovak Republic is prepared to contribute to this process so that the United Nations can approach the next millennium as a modern, viable, global body with the adequate authority to fulfil the purposes embodied in the United Nations Charter.

Address by The Right Honourable Percival James Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of Jamaica.

The Right Honourable Percival James Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Jamaica, The Right Honourable Percival James Patterson, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Patterson (Jamaica): Mr. President, your election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly is a fitting and well-deserved result of your distinguished service for your country in the international community.

I also wish to convey our appreciation to Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia for so ably directing the work of the fifty-first session, and to congratulate him for a job well done.

I join those who have spoken before me in welcoming the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan to this, his first General Assembly session since his assumption of office. Already he has impressed us with his sincerity of purpose and his willingness to take bold initiatives. He can always rely on Jamaica's full

cooperation and support as he seeks to steer the United Nations towards the new millennium.

Exactly 35 years ago, Jamaica became a Member of the United Nations by one of its first acts as a sovereign nation. We did so in recognition of the central role in the management of global affairs which only the United Nations can fill and from our desire to participate as an equal partner in that process. Ever since then, Jamaica has actively sought to contribute in a constructive spirit to the building and strengthening of the international system. One concrete result of these efforts is the location in Jamaica of an offshoot of the system, the International Seabed Authority, established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which is generally acknowledged to have been a signal achievement in extending the reach of international cooperation. We feel confident that the Authority will be able to discharge its mandate efficiently as a completely autonomous institution.

We are constantly reminded that we are approaching a new century and a new millennium. This new era provides exciting possibilities and, at the same time, poses formidable challenges. It requires of us a creative effort to find new directions and a continuing search for fresh solutions. The fluidity and changing currents in world affairs demand constant adaptation and adjustments to meet contemporary realities.

Some old disputes remain unresolved, and an array of new problems continues to enter the international agenda. The situation in the Middle East should not be allowed to remain forever a source of anxiety and frustration. The rise of ethnic violence and intercommunal conflict must be halted now.

Whatever cloud of uncertainty may hang over the future, we must not fail to lay the foundations of a more stable and equitable world order which fosters greater hope and wider opportunities for mankind.

As we seek to strengthen the fabric of international security, there needs to be a concentrated focus on the root causes of instability, conflict and confrontation everywhere. The danger signals are unmistakably clear. The coexistence of a world of wealth and prosperity and a world of poverty and misery is too profound a contradiction to be ignored. It lies at the heart of an emerging crisis. More than one billion human beings are still condemned to abject poverty. The despair and frustration which form their daily experience breed tension and trigger instability which are bound to erupt from time to time.

In a world where we note with increasing concern the absence of appropriate measures by multilateral financial institutions to relieve the burden of debt, we are bound to question whether the economic measures applied in the last few years represent the only way for developing countries to orient their economies. We cannot accept that the impoverishment of millions is a necessary cost of future world growth.

Globalization and liberalization, which have led to the breaking down of so many barriers between nations, are not removing the barriers between rich and poor. The process seems instead to be widening the differences and deepening the divide. The benefits of increased production and the expansion of global trade have been unevenly spread. Many developing countries are being increasingly marginalized in the process. Expected transfers of resources from increased trade and investment flows have not materialized, while the burden of debt remains a major constraint on development. Simply put, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

Unless we redress the imbalance — and quickly — the disparities will increase exponentially. To avert imminent disaster, there has to be a reversal of the pattern of transfer of technology and more liberal access to the markets of developed countries.

In all this, the United Nations has a decisive and strategic role to play. It should direct and channel international cooperation to correct distortions and inequities in the system, and contribute to the creation of an international economic environment facilitating economic growth and the benefits of development for all.

The new trading system is skewed in favour of the economically powerful. It is becoming more and more apparent that free trade, as practised by its loudest advocates, is not necessarily fair trade. For developing countries, access to larger markets remains difficult, owing to a variety of protective barriers. And where special and historical market arrangements for small producers still exist, these are now under threat from alliances of powerful governmental and private interests.

We developing countries cannot afford to shut ourselves off from what is taking place around us. The pace of change is at times bewildering, but we cannot say, "Stop the world, I want to get off". We must make use of the positive elements of modernity, organization of work and efficiency, to build the kind of society we wish

to leave to our children. The empowerment of all of the peoples of our countries is of paramount importance to the advancement of our societies.

Such empowerment requires that priority attention be given to human-resource development and human-capital formation, and to the optimal utilization of all the available human and natural resources of our time. Increasingly, where this has not already started, our programmes of education and training will have to be redesigned and refocused to enable our peoples to function effectively in the emerging knowledge-based world economy. Applications of science and technology and advances in telecommunications must become all-pervasive factors to be effectively and appropriately utilized for the benefit of our peoples.

Nothing would better fulfil the lofty ideals of our founding fathers than an immediate global assault on poverty, ignorance and disease. To win the battle, I call upon this Assembly to emphasize the creation, application and dissemination of knowledge in every corner of the Earth.

Liberalization and globalization, as they are being practised, have not shown the capacity or willingness to take into account the genuine interests or practical possibilities of small States. This is the painful lesson that we as Caribbean producers of bananas have learned. The recent panel ruling by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva on the European banana regime threatens to ruin the economies of the smaller States of the Caribbean, thereby endangering the economic stability of the entire region. It demonstrates not only the vulnerability of small economies, but also the extent to which we are at the mercy of those whose calculations seem oblivious to the interests of our survival.

Small economies operate under severe resource constraints and need to conserve the natural environment, which is a precious resource. That is why countries members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) attach special importance to international recognition of the peculiar circumstances and needs of small island developing States, as highlighted in the Barbados Programme of Action, which was adopted by the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

It is with great disappointment that we note how little progress has been made to implement the Programme of Action. There is a special need for financing arrangements

to develop production capabilities, infrastructure and environmental protection programmes.

Small island States suffer other disadvantages. The Caribbean is renowned for its natural beauty, but it is also vulnerable to a range of frequent natural disasters. To the physical limitations in resources and economic scale have been added the hazards of nature.

Even as I speak, the people of the small island of Montserrat are struggling to maintain their existence in their own land, two thirds of which has been destroyed by a volcano that resumed activity just over two years ago. As a member of the Caribbean Community, Montserrat's plight is of grave concern to all CARICOM States. I speak on behalf of the Community in acknowledging the categorical commitment given by the administering Power, the United Kingdom, for both emergency assistance to Montserratians and for the sustainable development of that territory.

The costs of reconstruction are immense. Members of the Caribbean Community have offered constructive support to the recovery efforts. We believe that the international community should also respond in a humanitarian gesture of solidarity. I therefore take this opportunity to appeal to the General Assembly to demonstrate appropriate support for Montserrat through the adoption of tangible measures to assist in the rebuilding and sustainable development of that island. It is our hope and expectation that the membership of the United Nations will be able to devise a specific scheme of assistance for a small and courageous people.

We all look to the United Nations to help in emergencies, but above all, to be effective in keeping the peace. It should be ready to respond promptly to crises as they occur and to defuse tensions and conflict situations through preventive diplomacy. We believe the present time affords a significant opportunity for creating the framework to fulfil this role and for us to shape a rapid-response capability.

In recent years, a number of unilateral as well as multilateral measures have resulted in a more positive climate for international peace and security. The conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention have enhanced the prospects for real progress towards the goal of general and complete disarmament. We nevertheless acknowledge that more needs to be done in

the areas of arms regulation and disarmament, in respect especially of conventional weapons and the proliferation of small arms.

We welcome the steps being taken to prohibit the use of anti-personnel landmines, which should be regarded as a category of inhumane weapons that can no longer be allowed to cause the maiming and loss of life of civilians. We urge Member States to give full support to the Ottawa process for the conclusion of an international treaty to ban this category of weapons so that there can be universal obedience.

The threat to international peace and security can no longer be viewed in purely military and political terms.

Illicit trafficking in drugs poses a serious threat, as all too often we witness the pervasive and pernicious effects of the production and consumption of illicit drugs. The massive demand and the lure of profits from the trade have spawned a transnational network of criminals with considerable resources and influence. The activities of these groups are particularly threatening to small States such as those in the Caribbean, where the State apparatus is often stretched to deal with their coercive capability. Within the Caribbean Community we have taken these threats seriously and have committed significant resources to confronting them. Our geographical proximity to the major destination for the consumption of drugs makes the Caribbean particularly vulnerable as a transshipment point. We therefore view bilateral and regional cooperation as critical to combating drug smuggling.

An associated problem that is particularly dangerous for us is the smuggling of arms and weapons of destruction, which is a significant factor in spreading a cycle of crime and violence. CARICOM has pushed for a regional initiative to attack this problem. We look forward to hemisphere support, particularly in restricting illegal exports from the main areas of manufacturing and sale of small arms.

It is evident from all the forces at work that the imperatives of interdependence, the impact of globalization and the interlinkage in global problems require a renewal and strengthening of multilateralism. With the end of the cold war, we now have within our grasp the opportunity to establish a lasting framework for international cooperation and to build genuine partnerships that will guarantee a future that is secure for all. The challenges of the emerging world order are best addressed by multilateral approaches. Isolationism and unilateralism cannot be viable options, but

multilateralism can thrive only if there are effective multilateral institutions.

The United Nations remains indispensable as the only universal mechanism capable of addressing issues of global impact and concern. But we must realize that the international society which the United Nations now serves is vastly different from the one in existence when the Organization was originally created. The reshaping of the United Nations therefore has to take into account new and complex international realities. Without compromising the fundamental objectives of the Charter, we need new rules and procedures to guide us.

Of special importance is the reform of the Security Council, in terms of both composition and mode of operation. The Council is a vital organ in the working of the United Nations. It is essential for its effectiveness that it command the confidence of the international community.

Jamaica supports an expansion of membership of the Council which will make it more representative of the international community. We advocate the adoption of procedures that will make it more democratic and transparent in decision-making. We recognize that there are important and delicate issues at stake and that we should proceed with care, but we have a concern that the process should not be mired in endless debate. We believe there is a sufficient consensus on proposals to form the basis for decisions soon.

We also acknowledge that more efficient management and more scope for effective initiative by the Secretary-General and his staff are essential to a strengthened United Nations structure. We support the Secretary-General in this endeavour.

Jamaica also endorses the need for measures to improve efficiency, and we have no quarrel with reform to streamline and rationalize the system. In welcoming these steps, we must however emphasize that reform is not synonymous with cost cutting. Reform is not about doing less; it is about doing better.

We would therefore wish to see a process that strengthens the capacity of the United Nations to deliver the services required by Member States as well as cement the linkages among the organs of the system while preserving comparative advantages, complementarities and synergies. The exercise must improve the capacity of the United Nations to take preventive action and respond

swiftly to crises. Above all, for small developing nations such as my own it is important that the Organization continue to play a leadership role in defining global development priorities.

Not all Member States will readily embrace the reform proposals that have been introduced, yet no one can deny the need for meaningful action to strengthen and improve the United Nations system. We must therefore seek to find common cause and summon the collective will to implement the measures that are necessary for its revitalization. It is our collective responsibility. Effective reform of our global institution requires broad agreement on the main features of the new global environment. We must clearly define the role the United Nations is expected to play in the next millennium. Our common vision must be one in which the United Nations can act as the catalyst for change and an instrument of progress on behalf of all peoples of the world.

Let us resolve to equip the United Nations with the necessary tools, including the requisite financial resources in accordance with Charter obligations, to enable it effectively to undertake its leadership role in safeguarding international peace and security in ensuring the economic and social well-being of mankind. It is our responsibility, and our peoples are looking for an institution energized to act effectively and swiftly to address the challenges that confront us as we approach the twenty-first century. Let us exploit the opportunity we now have to fashion a United Nations which reflects the hope and aspirations of all mankind for sustainable development, for lasting security and for enduring peace.

The new millennium beckons with its endless possibilities and challenges. Let not narrow self-interest prevent us from taking bold and decisive steps to meet these challenges. Jamaica and the Caribbean Community stand ready to play their part in a cooperative effort to attain global equity and prosperity. All of us owe it to ourselves and to succeeding generations.

I urge the international community wholeheartedly to embrace this venture in a genuine spirit of solidarity and harmony. History will not forgive us should we fail to do so.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Jamaica for the statement he has just made.

The Right Honourable Percival James Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Ferrero Costa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru.

Mr. Ferrero Costa (Peru)(*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for me to take part in this General Assembly as the representative of the people and Government of Peru, under the leadership of President Alberto Fujimori. I extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over this session and assure you of the fullest support by the delegation of Peru. We likewise congratulate Ambassador Razali Ismail, President of the previous session.

Peru reaffirms its unfailing dedication to the purposes, principles and norms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, without whose faithful application it is not possible to achieve peace and harmonious coexistence among States. We must all ensure respect for international law, especially scrupulous and good-faith compliance with treaties, and must contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and participate in the promotion of economic and social development. Accordingly, effective observance of the Charter and respect for its principles are today more necessary than ever in order to endow multilateralism with renewed credibility and vigour. We live in a day of marked change in the organization of power and of globalizing trends in the international system which require, in keeping with the Charter, a scrupulous egalitarianism in relations between States and, accordingly, multilateral policies in keeping with the times as an appropriate means of conferring priority on the common goals of mankind in our era.

Institutional reform of the United Nations system is imperative to make it more efficient, adapt it to the present needs of the international community and consolidate institutions that will be truly representative of the interests we all share.

For four years now the General Assembly has been at work on the reform of the Security Council. National positions have already been made known and reiterated. We should now decide whether we shall embark on the negotiations proper or whether that should be deferred until better political conditions prevail, for the unproductive prolongation of this debate could affect the

prestige and authority of the Organization at a juncture when it is essential instead to strengthen it as the supreme world forum for dialogue, understanding and cooperation.

We are aware of the difficulty of this process. To those who have a duty to exercise their power with self-restraint we address an invitation to be flexible. We also believe that pressures or haste would be ill advised, since they could hinder the achievement of a legitimate and vital goal.

Peru believes it is necessary to make the Security Council representative, to enhance its legitimacy, to secure equitable geographical representation through its expansion, to give it greater transparency, and to take the first steps towards the abolition of the veto through strict limits on its use. Accordingly, Peru supports the increase of both categories of members. All of the foregoing should be achieved through a legitimate agreement that does not discriminate against developing countries.

To keep pace with the momentum generated by global problems, a new institutional structure is needed, such as that proposed by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his "A Programme for Reform." In order better to serve international peace and stability and the sustained growth of the world economy, renewed efforts are needed that will be in keeping with the diversity of Member States.

We support the strengthening of the Secretariat, the emphasis on the promotion of development and the recommendation for rationalizing and optimizing the use of its financial resources, as well as the transfer of the resources thus released to development cooperation activities.

The *Human Development Report* for 1977 reveals that the problem of internally displaced persons has taken on dramatic dimensions; the numbers increased fivefold during the decade 1984-1994. At the same time, we note in the report submitted by the representative of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights concerning institutional lacunae in this area of the United Nations that there is no institution with exclusive responsibility for such displaced persons.

We propose that at this session of the General Assembly, which the Secretary General has called the reform Assembly, the question of institutional responsibility for the internally displaced be addressed.

Peru favours the idea of unifying the country offices and operations of the agencies to facilitate the implementation of comprehensive programmes in which the United Nations system will be able to put its recognized capacities to full use.

No reform can be successful without the necessary financial resources. The financial situation of the Organization is a subject of widespread concern. Peru is of the view that contributions to the regular budget are a legal obligation that should be fully and promptly discharged. The principle of capacity to pay should remain the fundamental criterion in the apportionment of assessments. Accordingly, if States in arrears do not take concrete measures to clear their indebtedness, certainly without setting conditions, it will not be possible in a timely manner to earmark resources for activities essential to the majority of our countries. Such is the case, for example, with the campaign against poverty.

There are other key questions on our increasingly abundant international agenda. We must place increasing emphasis on economic and social issues, cooperation for development, environmental protection, humanitarian assistance, the advancement and defence of human rights and, of course, the fight against illegal drug trafficking, terrorism and corruption.

Peru approaches the development of the international system on the basis of four criteria that guide its foreign policy: the pre-eminence of representative democracy and the rule of law; the promotion of the fundamental rights of the human person; consolidation of the market economy and development of regional economic integration agreements; and the search for peace and the advancement of cooperation for development.

In the era of globalization, Peru views international peace and security as multidimensional tasks. If States are to assume them as real commitments and priorities, they must be associated with a higher purpose, namely, with improving the intolerable lot of some 60 per cent of the world's population.

Problems such as poverty, acute poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, infant mortality, discrimination and marginalization in general constitute a picture of potential social violence that threatens the universal ideal of a peaceful and orderly life. The plight of poverty and the challenge of promoting human development have radically altered the direction and pace of international relations.

The international system is tending towards a gradual demilitarization. With the end of the cold war and the reduced risk of a global military confrontation, conditions have been created to give priority, on the basis of dialogue and cooperation, to the long-delayed task of advancing economic and social development.

General and complete disarmament continues to be a key element in security and an abiding goal of the international community. Peru attaches special importance to non-proliferation in all its aspects, primarily nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. My country participated actively in the arduous negotiations that culminated in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and signed it on the day it was opened for signature.

We are gratified at the outcome of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, in the context of the Ottawa process to prohibit the production, transfer and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines, in which Peru has participated as a full member from the outset. We are preparing to sign the global agreement in December. The Rio Group has undertaken to make our region the first in the world to be free of these odious devices, which day after day continue to take their toll of thousands of innocent victims.

Peru is a peace-loving country that works for peace and repudiates conflict. We want to strengthen political and economic cooperation with all countries and groups of countries in various regions on the basis of common interests and mutual benefit. We emphasize especially the forging of closer ties of friendship and cooperation with neighbouring countries and fostering mutual trust through specific processes, mechanisms and measures that we are vigorously pursuing.

Without economic growth, there can be no creation of wealth or jobs, and without these there can be no development or prosperity. That is the great challenge of our time. We must act to create conditions of market transparency and social convergence in order to sustain the growth of the world economy, the opening and liberalization of trade, services and capital flows and the transfer of technology. Developed and developing countries must reach an understanding in order to avoid a return to that not-so-distant past when narrow forms of protectionism and conditionalities failed to overcome inequality and, indeed, aggravated it.

Globalization must not lead to greater poverty and discrimination, for they are one of the principal obstacles

to stability, and, on the eve of the twenty-first century, they also pose a moral challenge. We must adopt measures to incorporate disadvantaged societies into policies and processes that promote economic growth and social development.

In Peru, the campaign for the gradual reduction of poverty until its eradication has taken a comprehensive approach. Its focal points are openness, modernization and liberalization of the economy, reform of the State and a legal framework that guarantees property and promotes investment. In addition, we are pursuing consistent sectoral policies, financed by 40 per cent of our national budget going to items in the social sphere, such as health, housing, education, population and justice. The results already achieved in economic and social growth are well known, and Peru is considered a stable, secure country with a bright future. Around the year 2000, the Peruvian Government hopes significantly to reduce acute poverty and poverty in general.

The United Nations has primary responsibility for addressing three negatives trends of universal scope: illicit drug trafficking, terrorism and corruption. We are combating vigorously these criminal phenomena because they erode fundamental values and threaten the stability of democracies. The upcoming special session of the General Assembly on the question of drugs — a session that we fully support — calls for unity of purpose. The international community will have an excellent opportunity to tackle this problem in all of its dimensions. Peru has been achieving concrete results in all facets of this comprehensive campaign, not only in interdiction but also in crop eradication and alternative development. We hope to see a substantial increase in international cooperation that would help step up our anti-drug policy and would complement, even if only partially, the tremendous national efforts that we have been making. We hope that this enhanced cooperation will materialize, in view of the increased awareness and greater political will that have emerged worldwide regarding a problem for which all of us, without exception, share responsibility.

The Eighth International Anti-Corruption Conference, which took place three weeks ago in the capital of Peru, brought together more than 600 representatives from 93 countries. I wish to highlight the set of recommendations that emerged for combating public and private corruption. These are contained in the Lima Declaration, the first global document of its kind. It establishes an evaluation and follow-up mechanism that

will bring these recommendations to the attention of Governments and international institutions. The goal henceforth in this endeavour, which concerns Governments and citizens equally, will be to identify specific problem areas, taking into account public opinion and with the effective participation of civil society.

The United Nations, as the global framework for combating corruption in all its manifestations, must participate in these efforts, just as the inter-American system has been doing within its own geographical area.

The phenomenon of terrorism has, at the cost of countless innocent human lives and huge material losses, today placed itself on the agenda of contemporary international relations. We have already unequivocally and at all levels condemned terrorist acts and the criminal groups that perpetrate them, and we have also agreed that terrorist acts represent human rights violations. It is now time to undertake a process of consultation that will enable the international community to avail itself of universal legal instruments with which to combat effectively terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as we are striving to do on our continent.

Five years after the adoption of the plan of action of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the lack of progress on Agenda 21 is discouraging. There has been an erosion of the political commitment entered into, especially with respect to the allocation of new and additional resources, as well as scant willingness to transfer technology to the developing countries.

We reaffirm that only a comprehensive approach can lead to the achievement of sustainable development, because this requires a consolidation of the process of the opening and liberalization of trade, as well as commercial and environmental policies that are mutually supportive. An adequate transfer of financial resources and technologies to support national policies is also required. In this task, no State should shirk its individual responsibility.

One of the challenges facing the international community is to ensure the effective promotion and full observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The advancement and protection of human rights are central concerns of the Peruvian Government. The concept of human development, which underlies the entire economic and social policy of our State, focuses on a revalorization of life and of the human being. The cooperation of the United Nations is essential, through a

realistic approach that takes due account of regional and national characteristics and that is geared primarily to achieving a culture of human rights.

Many countries, including Peru, are currently facing a cyclical, worldwide natural phenomenon known as El Niño, whose severe economic, environmental and social consequences are drastically changing the marine environment, which is a source of food and employment for broad sectors of humankind. The damage that these large-scale oceanic and atmospheric changes did in the past prompted my country some decades ago to promote the study of this phenomenon. Thus in 1974 a regional study of El Niño was carried out in the framework of the Permanent South Pacific Commission, a subregional organ of the South-East Pacific Action Plan, which has continued to address this problem with the valuable support of organizations such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the World Meteorological Organization.

The knowledge acquired by Peru and other countries, as well as by international, regional, and world bodies, needs to be integrated and systematized. Accordingly, Peru proposes the establishment of a global programme of integrated cooperation on the El Niño phenomenon, which would enable our countries to mitigate its effects and the ensuing material damage. In order to lay the foundations of this program and set it in motion, we should consider holding an international meeting with the participation of the relevant agencies of the system, regional organs and the respective national programmes of the countries concerned. In this context, we propose that, as part of the reform of the United Nations system, its operational capacity in the area of the monitoring and the mobilization of assistance for natural disasters be maintained and strengthened.

The development policy now being implemented in Peru is anchored in the universal concepts, values and principles propounded by the United Nations: democracy, economic freedom, respect for the fundamental rights of the human person, environmental conservation, the advancement of women and protection of the rights of indigenous populations.

Responding to the dictates of its history and geography, Peruvian society has since ancient times embodied the ideal of unity within diversity. We Peruvians are laying the foundations of our own future. I shall not dwell on the policies that we have been pursuing for the last seven years, their impressive results

or the vicissitudes in this process that have tested our resolve and perseverance. But I feel that it is appropriate to repeat the principal characteristic of our development model, which is a harmonious and rational complementary relationship between economic and social policies, which for the first time in many years is enabling us to carry out a realistic strategy for sustainable human development. Accordingly, the modern and efficient functioning of the United Nations system of cooperation is now, more than ever, of strategic value to Peru. I should like in particular to express thanks for the cooperation that the United Nations system has been providing to the Peruvian people, which is stimulating and complementing our national effort.

The United Nations is the best instrument available at a global level to consolidate international peace and security, respect for the sovereignty and independence of States and international law, and for the promotion of economic and social development. Accordingly, its operations, approaches and strategies should provide effective answers to the challenges of the contemporary world and the needs of our peoples, who continue to place their hopes in our Organization. Peru will always remain committed to that endeavour.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Croatia, His Excellency Mr. Mate Granić.

Mr. Granić (Croatia): It is a special privilege and honour for me to address the General Assembly at the beginning of its fifty-second session.

At the outset I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, as the new President of the General Assembly, confident that your extensive and proven diplomatic experience and skills will play an important role in the work of the Assembly.

I should also like to express our gratitude to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, whose devoted and vigorous work has shown that United Nations reform is much more than mere rhetoric, and who set a new standard of performance in the General Assembly.

As a Central European and Mediterranean country, Croatia highlights as its strategic priorities overall stability in the region, full integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions and the assertion of its position in the new post-cold-war Europe. Hence the special attention my Government pays to the policy of good neighbourliness and the development

of stable relations with all neighbouring countries, based on the principles of full respect for the existing internationally recognized borders, for minority rights and for the peaceful resolution of existing and possible disputes in the spirit of the United Nations Charter. Today I can point out with satisfaction that Croatia has concluded dozens of bilateral agreements with its neighbours, and relations with each of our immediate neighbours are being fully regulated and are steadily improving.

Croatia hosted two large-scale United Nations peace operations: the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO). The United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), in the Danubian area, and the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP) are still present. Croatia has also played an important role in facilitating the Stabilization Force (SFOR) operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate my Government's sincere gratitude for all the efforts that were made by the United Nations to stop the war in Croatia and alleviate its consequences, as well as to express my country's sincere sympathies to the families of the "blue helmets" who have fallen while attending to their lofty duties.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to express our appreciation and thanks to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his peace efforts in Croatia. As a United Nations official in the field and as Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations he made a major personal contribution to overcoming the crisis. Our great thanks go to UNTAES and Mr. Jacques Klein, until recently Transitional Administrator in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, whose vigorous work, leadership skill and successful cooperation with the Croatian Government have been instrumental in the peaceful reintegration of these areas into Croatia.

During the many months of the United Nations presence in Croatia and elsewhere in the area of the former Yugoslavia, my country had a chance to see for itself all the potential and the weaknesses of peacekeeping operations. It has been proven beyond any doubt that a peace operation can be successful only if its mandate is clearly defined, in terms of its goal as well as its time-frame, and if it is actively and fully supported by the

Security Council and the Secretary-General, and spearheaded by an uncompromising leadership explicitly determined to use all means required for the completion of its mission.

This knowledge has been gained at a high political, material and, worst of all, human price, so it is to be hoped that it will be wisely exploited in the future. For its part, Croatia is anxious to step out of its role as a country hosting peacekeeping operations and instead assume the role of an active participant in such operations elsewhere. Here and now I can confirm the readiness of my country to join the roster of United Nations Member States whose troops participate in international peace endeavours.

The fifty-second session of the General Assembly is taking place against a background of great obligations and equally great expectations regarding the reform of the United Nations system. The timely and far-reaching proposals put forward by the Secretary-General have opened the door for reforms. Croatia gives its firm support to his proposals, and we are ready to render any assistance needed in introducing the kind of changes we owe both to those who laid the foundations of this Organization and to future generations. As for the need to rationalize the work of the General Assembly and reduce its huge agenda, Croatia has put forward a proposal to delete the item on the General Assembly's agenda entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Croatia", as its title and topic no longer correspond to the situation on the ground, which makes it obsolete.

In view of the geopolitical realities, Croatia advocates an increase in the number of Security Council members, both permanent and non-permanent. Half a century of old stereotypes ought to be phased out. Croatia supports the idea of granting permanent member status to Germany and Japan, with the right to permanent membership being kept in mind for those parts of the world, primarily Africa, which for more than 50 years, without any justification, have been deprived of permanent Security Council representation. Furthermore, my country supports the idea of assigning one more seat on the Security Council to the Eastern European Group.

Croatia strongly supports the reaffirmation and full implementation of the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). My country was pleased to note that during this year's NPT Preparatory Committee sessions some progress was achieved with regard to the principle of non-first use, especially against non-nuclear-weapon States, and it calls

on the nuclear States to give due consideration to proposals to have this principle codified in a legally binding document.

In May 1996, the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects amended Protocol II on landmines. Croatia, which has played an active role during the Ottawa process from the beginning, and which has already put in place its own unilateral moratorium on landmines, fully supports all the efforts which ultimately led to the decision at the recent Oslo conference to adopt the text of a global treaty banning anti-personnel landmines.

Croatia's preoccupation with the global landmine problem is also motivated by personal affliction. Millions of mines laid in the formerly occupied territories of Croatia during the war continue to pose a direct threat, especially to the most vulnerable: civilians. It is also a great impediment to the reconstruction of war-affected areas. The clearing of mines in these areas is a painstaking process, and, in spite of our best efforts, it will take many years to complete. Unfortunately, a lack of specialized equipment means that the process cannot move any faster. Having said this, allow me to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those who have thus far provided financial and other aid towards alleviating the landmine problem in my country, and to make a further appeal for any aid — material, financial or professional — which could help us expedite the mine-clearing process. In this context, I would like to express my Government's appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Centre in Zagreb and the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs for their efforts in helping us launch this process.

Quality of life, today and in the future, will greatly depend on success in the protection of human rights at both international and national levels. Protection and promotion of human rights — a cause in which the United Nations has played an indispensable role — is necessary in order to guarantee international stability and security. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has successfully enhanced the role of the United Nations in this important field and, at this juncture, I would like, on behalf of the Croatian Government, to congratulate Mrs. Mary Robinson upon her appointment to this post. Because of her excellent

qualifications and personal integrity, we are confident that she will perform her duties admirably.

Mr. Kamara (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Croatia's own human rights situation should be evaluated in the context of the exceptional circumstances of its recent history. Despite the trying circumstances of its inception, the Republic of Croatia has managed to build the foundations of a democratic society based on respect for human rights. In this regard, I can announce that in the coming month of October Croatia will ratify the European Convention on Human Rights. There are, of course, many outstanding issues, largely stemming from the war of aggression waged against Croatia. These include the return of displaced persons and refugees; identification of missing persons; the rights of ethnic Croats in neighbouring States; and the return of all Croatian Serbs who left Croatia at the instigation and under the orders of their leaders and who wish to return to Croatia. The Government of the Republic of Croatia intends to continue to deal with all these issues in keeping with its international human rights obligations as well as its legitimate concerns for the security of the State and the safety and welfare of all its citizens.

As a victim of aggression, Croatia advocates the need — and has even come up with its own initiatives — to set up an international tribunal for the prosecution of war crimes committed in Croatia and Bosnian and Herzegovina. Croatia has been cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia since its foundation. The Tribunal's Office has opened in Zagreb. The Croatian Government has established its own Office for Cooperation with the Tribunal and appointed observers to the Tribunal. Moreover, the Constitutional Law on Cooperation with the International Tribunal has been adopted. Croatia's principled position is to cooperate with the Tribunal within its obligations as defined in international law and in accordance with the relevant resolutions and the statute of the Tribunal adopted by the Security Council.

However, Croatia cannot be completely satisfied with the work of the Hague Tribunal to date. The charges raised so far, and the ethnic composition of the persons being tried in The Hague at present, do not properly reflect the responsibility of the sides involved in the conflict or the extent of the war crimes committed. On the other hand, by trying to subpoena the States and their high officials, the Tribunal has gone beyond its own statute and international law.

Current peace operations in the territory of Croatia — UNTAES and UNMOP — are considered successful by my Government. Under the Basic Agreement signed between the central authorities of the Republic of Croatia and the Serbs from the Croatian Danubian region, and pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions, the two-year UNTAES mandate expires on 15 January 1998. Croatia holds that at this moment there are no reasons whatsoever for any prolongation of the UNTAES mandate beyond 15 January 1998. We are also firmly convinced that this mission will be fully completed on time and will go down in history as one of the most successful United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The results achieved under the auspices of the United Nations and with the full cooperation of the Croatian authorities can be described as highly satisfactory. Demobilization has been completed. Local elections have been held through which the Croatian Danubian region has been reintegrated into the legal and political system of the country. Local Government has largely been transferred to the newly elected and constituted bodies.

Rules have been defined and designed in cooperation between the Republic of Croatia, UNTAES and UNHCR to enable a dignified, safe and organized return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes in and out of the Croatian Danubian region. So far a total of 1,500 displaced Croats have returned to the Croatian Danubian region, and a total of 8,000 Serbs have returned from the region to their homes elsewhere in Croatia. The return of displaced persons and the international presence will continue after the departure of UNTAES. At the invitation of the Croatian authorities, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has undertaken to monitor the developments in the Croatian Danubian region after 15 January 1998.

The reintegration of the Croatian Danubian region has never been an easy or simple process. The Republic of Croatia and all its citizens, especially the population of the Croatian Danubian region, including the persons expelled from it, owe a debt of gratitude to UNTAES and all the States whose troops have participated in this highly successful operation.

The mandate of UNMOP, which has been given the task of monitoring the demilitarization of the area from both sides of the southernmost border between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia, has been helpful in stabilizing security in that area and in creating conditions for a lasting settlement there through bilateral talks. The Republic of Croatia has shown full understanding for the interests of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with regard to the security of the Boka Kotorska Bay, while being concerned for its own security in the Dubrovnik hinterland. In this regard, UNMOP has played an important role, but it will not be possible to deal with the outstanding problems through endless prolongations of the United Nations mandate.

With relief and satisfaction, Croatia welcomes the easing of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and remains firmly committed to the principles and implementation of the Washington and Dayton Accords. My Government gives its active support to preserving the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to the consolidation of the federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a foothold and framework for the survival and well-being of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The role of the international community, especially that of the United Nations and the countries participating in SFOR, in the creation of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is irreplaceable at this stage of the peace process. Too much effort, resources and prestige have been invested in peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and too much suffering has been experienced by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to allow any risk which may undermine what has been achieved in Dayton and in its wake. Croatia will persist and persevere in its role as an active peace agent in the region, expecting other parties involved in the peace process to fulfil their obligations.

Those standing in the way of the Dayton Accords and continuing to defy the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a community of two equal entities and three constituent peoples have to be confronted with the same uncompromising determination of the international community, and, if required, with the same measures as were earlier applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which proved to be entirely necessary and productive. The economic reconstruction of the country — in which the international community should play an even more vital role — is also of special importance.

The agenda of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly is extensive, and a great deal of work lies ahead of us. There is also an opportunity before us to have this session of the General Assembly recorded in the annals of the Organization as a landmark in the Organization's

development. Croatia will be only too glad to help make this come true.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker on my list is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini, on whom I now call.

Mr. Dini (Italy): I warmly congratulate Minister Udovenko on his election to the helm of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His profound experience in international affairs is the best guarantee for the success of his mandate. Allow me also to thank his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who led the fifty-first session of the General Assembly with great distinction.

On all the broad issues confronting the General Assembly, Italy supports the statement made on Tuesday by the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

Today we have a historic opportunity to connect principles and reality, give life to our ideals and shape this Organization for decades to come. The ideologies that divided humankind in this century have crumbled. Meanwhile, the system engineered with such foresight by the founding Members amidst the horrors of the most devastating war the world has ever seen has maintained and increased its significance.

We no longer live in a world of purely national interests. More and more, policy-making is informed by global concerns such as human rights, solidarity and social justice. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, let us pledge to settle religious and ethnic conflicts through dialogue, tolerance and cultural exchange, and to find collective answers to international terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and the degradation of the environment. We can join forces to eradicate poverty, which is a major cause of social injustice and political turmoil in the world, and guarantee dignity, respect and better living standards for every human being.

The goals of a new world order, founded on mutual trust and the rejection of the threat and use of force, are peace, security, sustainable development and respect for the fundamental freedoms of the individual. But these values cannot be dictated by an elite group of States. The future of humankind is the responsibility of the international community as a whole.

As the United Nations prepares to meet the challenges of the third millennium, the General Assembly has a role of paramount importance to play.

At the opening of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly there was unanimous consensus on the need for a far-reaching reform of the United Nations system. In my address I stated that if the United Nations was to respond effectively to the growing concerns that had emerged, reform could no longer be postponed. The international community requires higher standards of security, development and democracy, and it needs them now.

On that occasion, I listed 10 specific proposals to make United Nations peacekeeping operations more effective, and I am glad to see that progress has been made on some of them. Procedures for periodic meetings between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries have been consolidated. To help the Organization respond to crises where and when they arise, Italy recently became the sixth country to formalize its participation in standby arrangements for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

President Clinton said in his speech on Monday that the first task of the United Nations must remain the pursuit of peace and security. When a situation of serious instability developed in Albania last March, the Security Council — with the full support of the Secretary-General — acted promptly, authorizing a coalition of the countries, led by Italy, willing to form a Multinational Protection Force. During the four months of its mandate, Operation Alba enabled the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, created a secure environment for the missions of international organizations, and made democratic elections possible. In short, it helped put the country back on its feet. One of the keys to its success was an innovative approach to peacekeeping, involving the rapid planning and deployment of the Force, and close coordination among the participating countries and the host country, under the constant monitoring of the United Nations.

To consolidate the gains that have been made and lay the foundations for Albania's growth and prosperity, the next step is to rehabilitate the State institutions and economy. With this in mind, the Italian Government has convened a ministerial conference for October, in Rome, with the participation of the Albanian Government and all the relevant international organizations to assess needs and decide on a common course of action.

For over half a century, the United Nations has been seeking to establish a permanent international criminal court to prosecute and punish genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, wherever and by whomever they are committed. This is a test of our collective responsibility, made even more pressing by the terrible massacres that have characterized recent ethnic conflicts, and Italy confirms its strong support, pledges its active contribution to this endeavour, and is prepared to host in Rome the diplomatic conference to adopt the statute for the international criminal court.

A second major challenge is arms control. Before dealing with the security requirements of tomorrow, we must stop living by the fears of yesterday. New standards of security can be produced only through international cooperation under the leadership of the United Nations.

Italy has some of the world's strictest and most advanced legislation on the export of arms. I am proud to report that this past June the Italian Government unilaterally decided to renounce the production, export, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines, and enabling legislation to this effect has already been passed by one branch of our Parliament. But the full value of this commitment can only be realized if it is shared by all countries, whether or not they are parties to the Ottawa process. The recent Oslo conference, to be sure, made remarkable accomplishments, but they are not yet universal. To achieve this goal, our efforts should be complemented by the continuing involvement of the Conference on Disarmament.

Two months ago, Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented a package of ground-breaking proposals to improve the effectiveness of the Organization and enhance its ability to meet the new challenges. Those proposals deserve our full support.

One important goal of the Secretary General's reform plan is to energize the strategic direction provided by the General Assembly. To this end, we need to streamline the agenda and identify priorities for consideration in the short- and medium-term. Since the time available for plenary debates is limited, we should focus on matters of general interest.

The reform of the Organization is a question of the highest priority for the current session of the General Assembly, as the Secretary-General himself has underlined. In the coming months, two other major subjects also command our attention: the financial

situation of the Organization, and the structure and composition of the Security Council.

To function properly, the Organization has to be able to rely on adequate resources. Assessed contributions must be paid in full, on time and without conditions by Member States. Italy, for its part, has always complied with this fundamental rule. Nevertheless, we believe that the time has come to agree on a realistic new scale of assessments, based on Member States' capacity to pay and making the Organization less dependent on the contributions of a single country.

However, let there be no confusion about our support for a review of the scale of assessments. There can be absolutely no link between Members' contributions and Security Council reform, lest the impression be created that permanent seats are up for sale.

This brings me to the reform of the Security Council. There is broad agreement that reform is needed to bring the Council more in line with the new realities of the world in which we live. The reform must be inspired by the principles of democracy, equitable geographical representation and transparency. These are the very principles guiding the proposal presented by Italy. While we are prepared to look constructively at other proposals, we must guard against those advocating a system that would divide Member States into four categories: first-class countries — the five current permanent members of the Security Council, with veto power; second-class countries — the new permanent members from industrialized nations, without veto power; third-class countries — "pseudo-permanent" rotating members, without veto power, from developing nations in different regions; and fourth-class countries — the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States, with fewer chances than ever of serving on the Security Council.

Such stratification of membership, reminiscent of the caste system in ancient empires, would defy the fundamental principles of logic and democracy, and marginalize some of the countries most active in the Organization. How could any of us accept relegation to the last of these categories and go back to our people and Parliaments and tell them that we actually voted in favour of our country's demotion to fourth-class status? Let me stress that this type of problem would not be generated by the Italian proposal, which calls for an increase only in non-permanent members, to be democratically elected by the General Assembly.

Another aspect of reform is the question of the veto. This cannot and should not be discussed independently of the issue of enlarging the Council. The two issues are inseparable. Indeed, every aspect of Security Council reform should be addressed at the same time and in the same context. Before determining the future size of the Council and the names of new members, we must define the criteria that should govern the reform. Ad hoc approaches will not work. Ultimately, no solution can be adopted unless there is broad consensus. And a lasting and equitable outcome cannot be reached through hasty and partial solutions. Forcing the issue would deepen divisions and jeopardize the larger and more urgent question before the General Assembly: approving the Secretary-General's reform package.

In a longer-term perspective, I would like to add that a fact-finding inquiry recently conducted by the Italian Parliament envisaged a permanent seat on the Security Council for the European Union, as a natural evolution of its common foreign and security policy.

Almost 55 years ago, on November 13 1942, President Roosevelt said that the future of the United Nations association

"should not be restricted to the 28 signatories of the Atlantic Charter, but should be one which all nations could join."

President Roosevelt believed that the purpose of the United Nations should not be the defence of the status quo and that its strength did not lie in sheer numbers, but in the way that Member States engaged in collective deliberations and action. This vision should guide our pursuit of a more promising future for all the people of this world. History will not be lenient with us if we fail.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, His Excellency Mr. Adrian Severin.

Mr. Severin (Romania) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset, I would like to extend to Mr. Udovenko our most sincere congratulations on his election to the high office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, as a representative both of a neighbourly and friendly country and of a region that has significantly increased its presence in the United Nations family in recent years. At such a decisive moment for the future of our Organization, he has a

mandate of high responsibility and I offer him our full support.

It is a great honour for me to address, for the first time, this prestigious forum, with its wide participation and global vocation, in my capacity as the representative of a coalition Government that arose 10 months ago in a democratic transition of power. From the outset, I would assure the Assembly that the new Romanian Government, in its strategy of consolidating the rule of law and a free-market economy, means to cooperate with and rely on the United Nations and its specialized agencies. We are interested in making the Organization capable of reacting more rapidly and efficiently to the current needs of Member States and to the new global challenges at this twilight of the millennium.

A few weeks ago, the Romanian Government, with support from the United Nations Development Programme, convened in Bucharest the third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. The Conference focused on the link between democracy and human centred development, both as a subject and as the target of political action, a theme of great interest that is currently enjoying top priority on the United Nations agenda.

In my capacity as Acting President of the Conference, I have the honour to submit to the Assembly's attention the document containing its proceedings and results. Government representatives from 77 States and, for the first time, non-governmental actors of civil societies, along with 14 international organizations, examined in a constructive and positive manner the current status and future issues of the process of consolidating their democratic systems and adopted by consensus a review and a set of recommendations, distributed as an official document of the General Assembly at this session.

These recommendations spell out the need for good governance and for broad participation by civil society in the democratic exercise, as well as for strengthening democratic institutions in order to face the challenges generated by globalization, corruption and organized crime. At the same time, Romania believes that it is of the utmost importance to ensure the continuity of the Bucharest Conference's efforts and its practical consequences. That is why, in keeping with the recommendations advanced in Bucharest, we suggest that a follow-up mechanism be established for the consolidation process of new or restored democracies.

We plan to continue consultations with the Secretary-General and with interested States and international organizations on these themes and on the proposal to convene a summit of the new or restored democracies in the year 2000.

I am confident that the results of the Bucharest Conference will act as points of reference in the debates of the current session. We shall work for the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution reaffirming the support of the United Nations system for the efforts of Governments to consolidate the new or restored democracies.

In line with the collective commitment we made at the United Nations fiftieth anniversary ceremonies, we are among those who believe that the strengthening of the Organization's capacity to respond adequately to the new needs and challenges of the twenty-first century is of highest priority. It is in the interests of our Organization to achieve, even at this session, realistic and balanced results, of mutual interest and the widest possible benefit, to enhance its credibility and viability. We welcome the Secretary-General's report on a programme for reform and we assure him of our confidence and support in achieving its objectives.

We associate ourselves with the European Union's position. Indeed, reform should be not a cost-cutting exercise, but rather a matter of strengthening the Organization's role as an active and efficient world forum. Our objective is to make the United Nations more efficient, more transparent, more responsible and, last but not least, more credible.

We also believe that the dividends obtained through better financial and personnel management — the so-called "dividends of reform" — should be reallocated to development activities for the developing countries. It is in this spirit that the delegation of Romania will take part in the reform process and cooperate with all interested delegations in identifying solutions enabling the General Assembly to reach a general agreement on a coherent and constructive response to the Secretary-General's proposals.

We have the opportunity today to live in a world awakened from the cold-war nightmare that divided us irreconcilably into friends and enemies, a world of communications and interaction in which closed societies cannot survive. Increasing globalization should help us to know each other better and bring us closer together to

build common projects. We are even invited to rethink our global society, the relations among us and the direction of our political actions. A new political philosophy, the philosophy of partnership, asserts itself in the context of relations between States, whereby what a country gains is added to and not deducted from its partner's benefit.

This philosophy was promoted in the last half century in European and Euro-Atlantic structures, with acknowledged positive results in the field of stability and cooperation on the continent. This is also why Central and Eastern European countries are naturally keen to integrate themselves into such structures.

That is also the philosophy Romania uses as a basis in developing a solidarity and cooperation policy at the subregional, regional and international levels aimed at consolidating and activating stability in its geographic region and throughout the world. We have tried fully to normalize relations with our neighbours, and we have proposed trilateral cooperation plans to our partners in the region. At the same time, we launched the idea of reviving the traditional commercial routes to Northern Europe and Central Asia. The same concept of building a network of communication and mutually beneficial cooperation is the basis for the development of economic cooperation in the Black Sea region and for our involvement in the Central European Initiative, the Central European Free Trade Agreement, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative and so forth.

The participation of Romania in the United Nations peacekeeping Mission in Angola, in the stabilization efforts of operation Alba in Albania and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), are testimony to our political willingness to act as a stabilization factor. At the same time, I would like to point out that Romania is ready to increase its contribution to the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and to contribute to other similar actions, such as the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other forces that remain necessary in that area.

All these efforts to establish an environment of confidence and cooperation that generates peace and security in Central and South-East Europe, as well as in some hot spots of the world, reveal not only a new approach, but also a new stage that Romania is passing through on its way from totalitarianism to democracy. In the current "post-transition" phase, the results achieved in

the democratic processes and economic reform, which have been recognized by the international community and financial institutions, qualify Romania legitimately to play a clearer and more active role in defining and designing common projects of security and progress in the region and in the world, including within the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

I would like to make a few remarks on some other important items on the agenda.

From the experience we have gained in our region and in neighbouring regions — Central and South-East Europe, the Middle East and the Caucasus — it can be concluded that poverty, the absence or weakness of institutions that are characteristic of the modern democratic State and distrust are among the causes of crises and conflict situations. Specific steps by the United Nations system and the entire international community are required to eradicate poverty. They should be aimed at supporting the countries of the region that are confronted with this phenomenon so that they can increase their production through the adequate use of their own specific resources and economic capabilities. Hampering such a process can have only negative consequences in the field of security and stability.

With regard to strengthening institutions that are part of a State based on the rule of law, it is necessary to create, alongside rapid-reaction forces for peacekeeping, a so-called civilian rapid-reaction force to support the establishment of institutions capable of maintaining State order and coherence in an open and free society.

Building up confidence involves dialogue and communication, as well as the elimination of any form of isolation. The United Nations should be efficiently involved in the dismantlement of terrorist infrastructures all over the world. At the same time, it is necessary to give up rhetoric and spectacular gestures in favour of direct negotiations between the interested parties, in a quiet and discreet atmosphere.

We would like to point out the importance Romania attaches to dialogue conducive to solutions negotiated by the parties directly involved, be it in the Middle East, Cyprus or the former Yugoslavia. It is our firm belief, particularly since our latest political contacts in the Middle East and in Bucharest, that the resumption of negotiations between the interested parties, based on the principles agreed in the Madrid and Oslo accords, is the

only way to achieve an equitable and lasting peace in the region.

We welcome and support the recent United States initiative, as well as the efforts of other countries, to unblock the peace process. We also welcome the direct negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, between the two communities of Cyprus with a view to an equitable and lasting solution to the Cyprus issue, and we express our willingness to take part in the peacekeeping operation in that country.

As main guarantor of peace and international security, the United Nations should play an active role in crisis prevention and management, using preventive diplomacy and, when necessary, peacekeeping operations. Romania will support such United Nations actions and intends to diversify its contribution by including civilian components in its contributions.

In the field of arms control and disarmament, we consider that the United Nations can and should set an example of change in concept and approach that go beyond the vestiges of the bloc mentality and lead to arms control and disarmament solutions capable of ensuring global security, with the existence of several centres of economic and cultural power. We attach special importance to nuclear non-proliferation issues, including the negotiation of a treaty to ban the production of fissionable materials for military purposes, the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the processes aimed at banning anti-personnel landmines.

The debates on economic and social issues should create the foundations for the necessary relaunching of the North-South dialogue on development, as such issues have been largely ignored in the context of the political developments subsequent to the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the end of the cold war or on matters linked to the expansion of NATO and the European Union. Our debates will have to take into account the recent trends in world economy — such as high rates of growth, far exceeding those of gross world product achieved by world trade; transportation; and the volume of direct investment and international financial transactions — and the necessity of ensuring a wider access of goods produced in developing countries to the developed countries' markets and enhanced cooperation on third markets. All these elements call for a conceptual reconsideration of the development process that gives due attention to the social component and ensures the participation of the main actors: Governments, private

sectors, transnational corporations and civil society. In this respect, we suggest that thought be given to the idea of setting up a social solidarity fund to help disadvantaged persons and support the integration of unemployed and marginalized persons into productive activities.

The Romanian economy has reached macroeconomic stability, by decreasing the inflation rate and the budgetary deficit, and started structural reform, in particular in the agricultural sector. Consistent efforts are being made to speed up privatization and attract foreign investors. With all this going on, we are interested in participating in a debate that can highlight measures envisaged by Governments for what the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund recently called "second generation reform", which will focus on microeconomics and social protection policies.

We believe that development assistance requires new and increased mobilization from the international community, and we favour enhanced coherence in the country programmes undertaken by United Nations bodies and funds, and more efficient use of resources allocated for development.

In view of the new threats facing our societies and institutions, we support measures aimed at strengthening the capacity of the United Nations in international drug control and the fight against corruption and organized crime. We welcome the establishment in Vienna of a single Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, as well as the convening, in 1998, of a special session of the General Assembly on drug control. Furthermore, we propose consideration of the United Nations declaring an international year for the fight against corruption and organized crime. This major issue could also be the subject of a special high-level segment of the General Assembly. Our objective is to elaborate and put into practice international cooperation instruments that enable us to work together to protect ourselves and eradicate these scourges.

We shall soon begin preparations for celebrating, in 1998, the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let us take this opportunity to reaffirm our firm commitment to the universality of all human rights, whose promotion and protection should always remain a priority for the United Nations. We support the measures envisaged by the Secretary-General to strengthen the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and we welcome the

appointment of the former Irish President, Mrs. Mary Robinson, as High Commissioner.

With regard to administrative and budgetary questions, the Romanian delegation is in favour of the Secretary-General's proposals for the regular budget for the 1998-1999 biennium, with the understanding that the reductions will not affect the future capacity of the Organization to fulfil its mandate. We support the efforts to improve the Organization's financial situation and place it on a sound and predictable footing. It is particularly important that, through open and constructive negotiations, we achieve feasible solutions with regard to the future payments of arrears and a new scale of assessments for the regular and peacekeeping budgets, thus reflecting the new realities and real capacity to pay of each State.

Finally, I assure the Assembly, once again, of the full cooperation of the Romanian delegation in our joint efforts to strengthen and enhance the efficiency of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to extend to the President and to the members of the General Committee, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, our congratulations on his election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His experience and diplomatic skills will undoubtedly contribute to the success of its work. I would also like to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, who conducted the work of the previous session with distinction.

I take this opportunity also to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan on his election as Secretary-General of the United Nations. We are confident that his vast experience in international affairs and his competence and expertise will strengthen the role of the Organization in achieving international peace and security. I am also pleased to express, once again, our deep appreciation to the previous Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose efforts had a positive and concrete impact on the progress of the work of the world Organization.

The present session is of special importance because of the major changes taking place on the world scene and the attendant far-reaching developments and transitions in the political, economic, social and environmental fields. Despite the state of openness that has characterized international relations, the success achieved in resolving some conflicts and the emergence of indications of relative improvement in the growth of the world economy, we are still facing new types of challenges. The most serious of these are reflected in racial, ideological, and ethnic conflicts and civil wars; the aggravation of poverty situations; human rights violations; violence; terrorism; and drugs. All of these have a negative effect on national security, the sovereignty of States and economic and social development. These challenges require cooperation and coordination between States at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

The important role played by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in dealing with these new developments as a whole is now the major incentive for consolidating its permanence, supporting its objectives and upholding its Charter. This means that, more than ever before, we must provide it with the political, financial and moral support that will enable it to respond appropriately and promptly to emerging global needs.

Having studied the report of the Secretary-General on the reform and renewal of the United Nations, the delegation of the United Arab Emirates welcomes in principle its recommendations and proposals aimed at strengthening and developing the work of the Organization and adapting it to the realities of the present-day world. At the same time, however, we wish to stress the importance of having the reforms reflect the aspirations of the countries of the world, particularly the developing countries, in achieving sustainable development and in promoting peace and security, stability and growth.

We also support the international efforts aimed at enlarging and restructuring the Security Council and improving its rules of procedure with a view to ensuring equitable geographical representation and equality among States, achieving transparency and objectivity in the adoption of its resolutions and the follow-up to their implementation, and preventing double standards, which have proved to be too dangerous in many issues of peace and security. In addition, we support all proposals calling for the strengthening of cooperation and coordination between the General Assembly, the Security Council and

the Economic and Social Council and for widening the circle of dialogue and negotiations with regional organizations in order to achieve a broader, more effective and more comprehensive consensus for the appropriate approach to reform and renewal.

Despite the initiatives and the relentless efforts of members of the Gulf Cooperation Council during the past few years to contain the devastating effects of the conflicts in the Arab Gulf region, which has great importance to regional and international strategies, and their continuing endeavour to support progress towards joint reconstruction and cooperation, the unstable political and security conditions in the region remain a source of concern for us. Such a situation therefore requires the establishment of a balance based on a firm political will to support all regional arrangements aimed at eliminating the causes of conflict and situations of occupation. It also requires building bridges for multilateral cooperation, at both the bilateral and the collective level, on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence, confidence-building, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, mutual respect for regional sovereignties and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means rather than the use of force, in accordance with the rules of international law and the Charters of both the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations.

The continued occupation since 1971 by the Islamic Republic of Iran of three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — is a major issue to which we and the other States of the region attach great importance. That occupation constitutes a source of constant tension, concern and instability in the region, particularly as the Iranian Government persists in changing the historic, legal and demographic character of the islands by constructing military and civilian installations and building bases on them. Examples of such measures are the construction of a branch of Bayan An-Nour University and two airports on the occupied islands of Abu Musa and Greater Tunb. Iran has also resorted to repeated military exercises conducted in the territorial waters of the United Arab Emirates, including those off the three islands, thus continuing to consolidate its occupation of the islands, persisting in its provocative policy and imposing a *fait accompli* by force. All this is in complete disregard of the dangerous consequences of this policy for the future and the territorial integrity of the region and for the aspirations of its peoples to peace, stability and the achievement of sustainable development.

The United Arab Emirates expresses grave concern about all such illegal actions and practices, which not only constitute a flagrant violation of its territorial integrity and an infringement of its national rights, but are also contradictory to the peaceful inclinations of the States of the region and the world at large. We therefore renew our call to the Islamic Government of Iran to fulfil its legal and political obligations and undo all its unilateral actions in the three Emirates islands. This would prove that its intentions were good and give credence to its stated policy, especially given certain recent statements by some Iranian officials calling for the resolution of existing disputes through peaceful means and expressing their desire to establish stability and security in the region.

The United Arab Emirates welcomed the new Iranian Government and its declared orientation, especially with regard to the promotion of good-neighbourly relations, the elimination of tensions and the peaceful solution of disputes in the region. We hope that the Iranian Government will consider all our peaceful initiatives in a spirit of objectivity and cooperation. These initiatives have already been supported by sister, friendly and other States, and call either for serious bilateral negotiations, without preconditions, to be entered into, or for the dispute to be submitted to the International Court of Justice.

Resorting to policies of violence and force, stockpiling banned weapons and using terrorism to deal with the concerns about the political and security balance in the region must not become an alternative to dialogue or to efforts to bolster the mechanisms for building peace and achieving the economic and social development of the countries of the region. For this reason, we support all measures taken by the States of the region to protect their sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

We stress the importance of full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Iraq and consider that the suffering of the Iraqi people should be dealt with within the framework of implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995).

We also urge the Iraqi Government to carry out in full all its legal obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially those dealing with the release of all prisoners of war and detainees who are citizens of Kuwait and other countries, and the restitution of Kuwaiti property.

The peace process in the Middle East is at a perilous juncture as a result of Israeli Government policies reneging on most of its obligations with regard to the peace process and the principle of land for peace, which are based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Such policies constitute a flagrant violation of humanitarian law, international legitimacy and the accords concluded between the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel, as do the ensuing serious actions, including the expansion of illegal settler activities in Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, particularly in Jerusalem; the expropriation of Palestinian lands and the demolition of houses; resort to alleged security reasons in order to carry out measures of collective punishment; and the imposition of an economic blockade.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns all such irresponsible Israeli policies and actions, and reiterates the importance of continuing the peace process as the only alternative for the stability and security of that region, regardless of the obstacles and challenges it is facing. It calls upon the international community, especially the United Nations, and the sponsors of the peace process to shoulder their legal, political, historical and humanitarian responsibilities.

We welcome the efforts of the Secretary of State of the United States of America during her recent tour of the region and hope that she will continue her endeavours to ensure that the Palestinian-Israeli accords are implemented and that negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks are resumed on the basis of the principle of land for peace and the inadmissibility of unilateral actions that would only prejudice the final phase of the negotiations. We also commend the tireless efforts of the countries of the European Union to persuade the Israeli Government to reverse its policy and seriously abide by all of its commitments in the context of the peace accords and international legality, in a manner that would enable the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights to self-determination, repatriation and the establishment of their independent State on their national soil, with Jerusalem its capital.

In the same context, and given that the other Arab parties adhere to the peace process as a *sine qua non* strategic objective strategy, the Israeli Government must make a similarly serious commitment to end its occupation of, and repeated attacks against, the territory of Lebanon in implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and to resume unconditional negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks so as to ensure its full

withdrawal from the Syrian Arab Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967, as well as from southern Lebanon and the west of the Bekaa valley.

The requirements of security, stability and a just and lasting peace in the region are urgent not only for Israel, but for all the countries of that region. Consequently, we emphasize the inalienable right of peoples to resist occupation and aggression and condemn all forms of terrorism, whether they are aimed against individuals or practised by States, because terrorism has a direct impact in undermining regional and international stability and security. We also regard the stockpiling of banned weapons and the threat of their use against other States as another dangerous manifestation of terrorism. We therefore urge the international community and the relevant international organizations to make effective efforts to render the region of the Middle East and the Arab Gulf a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and to demand that Israel accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and comply with the international control and safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Efforts by the United Nations and the regional organizations to deal with national and regional tensions and conflicts, as well as with the concomitant destruction of development infrastructure and human suffering in some developing countries, have not resulted in the containment of the causes or extent of such conflicts. In the European continent, for example, manifestations of tension and ethnic and racial bias still persist among some factions in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a result of the continued pursuit by certain Bosnian Serbs of policies that conflict with the peaceful solutions of the Dayton peace accords. There are also situations of tension, insecurity and conflict battering parts of the continents of Asia and Africa, such as Afghanistan, Somalia, the Great Lakes region and other areas. It is therefore imperative that more effective international and regional efforts be made in order to find peaceful and objective solutions to those conflicts. We also call upon the parties directly concerned to work and cooperate with efforts and endeavours designed to contain such situations in order to achieve peace and stability at the national and regional levels.

The first positive results achieved by globalization, development and the growth of world trade have not met the expectations of countries in advancing and strengthening their development or environmental and

social policies. This is particularly true in the developing and least developed regions that continue to suffer from the spread of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, as well as the burden of foreign debts, in addition to fluctuations in the rates of exchange and several other problems.

The creation of an equitable and just economic environment built on a foundation of cooperation requires joint efforts by developing countries on the one hand, and by developing and developed countries on the other. We must also take into consideration the special requirements of the least developed countries, in particular by increasing, rather than decreasing, official assistance to them and by lifting existing trade barriers and economic obstacles. This would contribute to a sharing of common responsibilities and interests among them. We also support all efforts aimed at promoting and enhancing the role of regional and international development organizations, at the forefront of which are the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and others, each within its own mandate, in the implementation of a global strategy for comprehensive development.

In seeking to enhance its participation in such regional and international institutions, the United Arab Emirates, thanks to the wise guidance of its Head of State, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, has achieved a qualitative and quantitative leap in the developmental, economic, social, environmental and human fields in the past two decades. It contributed, to a large degree, to the expansion of the bases for investment,

commerce, industry and the liberalization of trade. It therefore continued to provide development assistance to the developing and least developed countries, including, for example, humanitarian assistance and concessional loans provided by the Abu Dhabi Development Fund, the Zayed Benevolent Society and other multipurpose humanitarian institutions. Within the framework of our commitment to enhancing the contribution of the private sector in supporting the activities of the United Nations, we are pleased to announce that we shall be hosting a conference on the role of the private sector in supporting the United Nations, which is scheduled to be held in the Emirate of Dubai in mid-October. That will be in line with our policy of continuing to hold a series of multifaceted regional and international conferences and exhibitions in the cultural, social, economic, political and environmental fields. All these are regarded as complementing the United Nations efforts in the various areas of sustainable development.

In conclusion, I should like to stress the need to adopt values of security, peace and freedom as the formula for attaining a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive view of the issues of our common destiny. Let us, then, unite our efforts in building a world based on respect for the rule of law and justice, a world where peace, tolerance, prosperity and progress reign supreme.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.



General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

12th plenary meetingThursday, 25 September 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Fabián Alarcón Rivera, President of the Republic of Ecuador

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Fabián Alarcón Rivera, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations, the President of the Republic of Ecuador, His Excellency Mr. Fabián Alarcón Rivera, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Alarcón Rivera (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am honoured to extend to you, Sir, on behalf of the Government and the people of Ecuador, warm congratulations on your election to preside over this session of the General Assembly. I am sure that your efforts will contribute to the advancement of the activities of our Organization. You may rely on the constant and resolute cooperation of Ecuador.

I should like to speak of several matters of interest to the international community that the United Nations has incorporated into its working agenda. My country follows with interest their development within the Organization and will act on the basis of the principles that guide Ecuador's foreign policy.

Ecuador believes that the search for general and complete global disarmament is a goal that our Organization should pursue indefatigably. This is not a utopian ideal but, rather, a constant objective that requires the active participation of all States within a global ethical context. True to this principle, my country is a party to all international and regional instruments related to disarmament.

The nations of the world have welcomed the end of the cold war and the attendant reduction of the risk of nuclear holocaust. Nevertheless, Ecuador views with apprehension the persistence of nuclear-weapon-development programmes and the continued existence of large atomic arsenals and the risks they pose for the peace and well-being of all. The international community cannot relax its guard and cease to insist on the elimination of such means of massive and indiscriminate destruction. This conviction has led Ecuador to lend its determined support to the global non-proliferation regimen and to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Thus, at the last session of the General Assembly, Ecuador was a sponsor of the resolution calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas.

Furthermore, Ecuador supports the work of the Conference on Disarmament in drawing up a draft text for a convention on the control of fissionable material, which is to be submitted to the General Assembly, and fully agrees with the working document submitted by



members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries concerning the universal nature of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

With regard to weapons of mass destruction, disarmament has particular significance for the whole of the international community. However, we cannot overlook the fact that the subject of conventional disarmament is equally sensitive and that it is an issue that must attract the full and determined attention of the United Nations. For this reason, Ecuador welcomes the Disarmament Commission's decision to include in its agenda an item on guidelines for control, limitation and disarmament in connection with conventional weapons, with special attention to the consolidation of peace within the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N.

Ecuador also supports the convening in 1999 of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in accordance with the decision taken at the Assembly's last session. My country is especially interested in including in the agenda of that special session such relevant issues as the effective reduction of conventional forces and weapons, the relationship between disarmament and development, and confidence-building measures among States.

Because of their humanitarian cost, I must refer to a specific type of conventional weapon: anti-personnel landmines. Ecuador is a contracting party to several international agreements that ban and restrict the use of such weapons, and we urge all countries, whether signatories to those treaties or not, to observe them and scrupulously respect their terms.

My country is convinced that the community of States must persist in its efforts to reach agreement on the total prohibition of the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. Ecuador thus supports the Ottawa process, which is to conclude in December 1997 with the signing of a binding agreement on a total ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Humankind has painfully come to realize that international peace and security cannot be based on atomic equilibrium, arms races or mistrust and mutual suspicion. On the contrary, genuine peace must be based on respect for the rule of law, on the acceptance of the solidarity and interdependence of all States and on the common desire to move dynamically forward towards the solution of the critical problems of dire poverty, disease, unemployment, illiteracy and economic and social

inequality among peoples and nations. In order to make progress, we must recognize and live by universal ethical principles and seek peaceful solutions to our multilateral and bilateral problems through peaceful processes, through dialogue and reconciliation.

The countries of Latin America, and Ecuador in particular, are concerned by the fact that economic development is not accompanied by social development. It is ironic that in an ever wealthier world, development-cooperation resources have fallen 20 per cent in real terms in recent years. How, then, can the international community fulfil the commitments entered into at the World Summit for Social Development?

We, the developing countries, assume our responsibility in fighting poverty, providing better health and education to our people, reinforcing our democracies and consolidating our institutions. However, it is essential that international cooperation for development be continued, since this will result in a more just, stable and peaceful world.

There is no doubt that in recent years the world has changed dramatically. We have moved from an international society where political and military confrontation weighed heavily on relations to a system where cooperation and dialogue among the great Powers have gradually eased the fear of a nuclear holocaust. In this new environment of international relations, in which economic questions have become global in nature, the United Nations must also modify some of its previous patterns of conduct and management.

What do we want from the United Nations in the twenty-first century? The Secretary-General has submitted a comprehensive programme for the reform of the United Nations system, a programme that must be profoundly and carefully analysed by all Member States, and Ecuador will actively participate in the debate on this subject.

It must be pointed out that this world body must confront the great challenges to mankind, such as the promotion of economic and social development along with the needed preservation of the environment; the maintenance of international peace and harmony; the achievement of total and complete disarmament; the promotion of human rights; and the strengthening of cooperation among all nations to eradicate poverty.

Since its establishment, the United Nations has fulfilled a number of the purposes for which it was created. It is true that the Organization, for various reasons largely attributable to Member States themselves, has not fulfilled some of the high expectations of the international community. It is worth noting that one of the most accurate phrases ever uttered in this forum recognizes that the United Nations is exactly what its Members want it to be. The successes and failures of the Organization are the successes and failures of the States that make it up. I do not wish to start listing past errors, but we should not forget them, because they can serve as useful lessons. We must above all be aware that today there are new challenges, and that we must look ahead and face them.

We must design an Organization which, through practical mechanisms, leaves rhetoric aside and assumes a dynamic role in the solution of world problems. This will require substantial reform of the working methods of the United Nations. Furthermore, it will require a new attitude by Member States in order to create a just and equitable international society based on the authentic, democratically expressed will of the international community.

For the Organization to respond more effectively to the challenges now facing the international community, these reforms should not be restricted to a single sector within the institutional structure. Let me mention the reform of one of the most important organs of the United Nations: the Security Council. Ecuador attaches particular importance to the reform of that body as part of the strengthening of the United Nations. We believe that the ultimate objective of these efforts must be to develop a more democratic, transparent and truly representative working system for the Council.

The reform of the Security Council must not be limited to a mere discussion of the number of members or of how many delegations should represent each region — although here we believe that the number of Security Council members must be increased in the light of the new world realities, to obtain a more significant presence of developing countries in accordance with equitable geographical distribution. We also believe that real reform of the Security Council should aim above all at ensuring that decision-making machinery and processes have the transparency, effectiveness and pluralism that must characterize every democratic institution. This includes, among other specific measures, the limitation of the veto power of the Council's

permanent members, and timelier and more effective action to prevent international conflicts at the request of any State Member of the Organization.

As we approach the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law, I would like to reaffirm our hope that its objectives will be fully met, particularly those relating to the promotion of and respect for the principles of international law and to the broadest possible recourse to ways and means for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States. We know that complex international disputes cannot be settled solely by legal mechanisms, but it is no less true that any settlement must be based on legal instruments and must follow formal procedures.

An essential element of Ecuador's international policy is the search for a just and permanent solution to the Ecuador-Peru territorial issue. With the valuable help of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States as guarantor countries, talks between Ecuador and Peru are currently under way in Brasilia on the remaining impasses that affect our common border, in accordance with the commitment of both countries to find a peaceful and final solution to these issues. Ecuador will continue to participate in these talks, motivated by a true spirit of peace, because we desire a global, final, honourable and realistic solution that reflects the legitimate expectations of our people, which, together with the other peoples of the Americas, are seeking to create a future of mutual benefit and constructive and peaceful cooperation. The efforts of the Ecuadorian and Peruvian peoples are aimed at finding a definitive solution to this dispute.

International interest in the progress of the Brasilia talks and the immense prospects that would open for both countries in the new millennium are factors that should encourage our Governments to make all efforts necessary to settle this age-old historical controversy, and thus respond to the just aspirations to peace and development that we all share. Our country longs for peace and wants peace; it does not want war. We are convinced that there is no victory in a war, only different degrees of defeat owing to the incalculable consequences that can affect the political, moral, social and economic life of our countries.

The Charter of the United Nations states that world security is not limited to the significant issue of the prevention and settlement of violent conflicts. A safer world is also a world where general prosperity

eliminates the causes of most conflict and human suffering. The United Nations should continue to be a forum for the discussion of critical issues concerning the search for the economic development of more than three quarters of the world's population.

To be sure, Ecuador is aware that economic growth per se is not enough to generate adequate social justice and an equitable distribution of income. My Government has designed programmes and plans aimed at covering the needs of the marginal populations of Ecuador. With the assistance of the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, we have established a national social development plan that includes government action in line with the commitments assumed by the international community during the World Summit for Social Development.

The socially oriented philosophy of my Government leads me to join those who suggest that the eradication of poverty throughout the world should be the main goal of the international community's coordinated efforts in the coming years. The globalization of the economy cannot be limited to the use of cheap labour in the developing world, the proliferation of profitable investments and the exploitation of certain markets. It should also aim at providing coordinated and systematic assistance to immense populations whose only experience of globalization has been their eternal poverty and frustration.

Since time immemorial, the inhabitants of Ecuador have had special devotion to nature. My country, which has one of the greatest biodiversity reserves in the world, has a deep sense of respect for nature and an awareness of its value, which are deeply rooted in our traditional culture. Ecuadorian indigenous communities, for example, possess ancestral knowledge concerning the rational management of resources and the preservation of the ecosystem.

Ecuador is aware of the difficult dilemma faced by every society when it comes to choosing between economic progress and the preservation of the environment. Given the basic value that the natural environment has for the Ecuadorian people, we have dedicated all our efforts to preventing, or at least limiting to the greatest extent possible, the degree of destruction of nature caused by economic progress.

As it did during the special session of the General Assembly held last June, my Government would like to

reiterate its strong commitment to the implementation of Agenda 21 and to reaching the Agenda's goals of sustainable development. The efforts of developing nations will be successful only if they can secure the effective support of developed countries through compliance with the commitments assumed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio summit. There can be no universal environmental preservation without a genuine change in the unsustainable consumption patterns that bring about the increasing deterioration of the global environment, without adequate financial assistance for development in percentages proportional to gross domestic product, and without adequate facilities to access modern technologies.

The establishment of new trade and financial regimes and the urgent need to restructure our economies give rise to enormous challenges for developing countries. We believe that we should redouble our efforts in order to meet the requirements of globalization, in such a way that our nations can also benefit from the new international economic vigour.

Unlike developed countries, for developing countries the globalization process is not only a way to reactivate productive growth, maintain an upward trend in stock market indicators or increase business profits. For developing countries, the economic aspect of the so-called globalization should be an opportunity to accelerate the sustainable development of their peoples, particularly with regard to social issues.

It should be recalled that developing countries have made spectacular efforts to adjust to the new economic realities. Trade adjustment and liberalization programmes have had strong short-term impacts in significant sectors of our society. Several States have adopted severe economic measures, hoping that in the end they will have positive results for all. However, we cannot help but feel that this attitude contrasts with the behaviour of some industrialized countries.

In trade matters, for example, although some developed nations insist on the liberalization of trade, they persist in keeping various barriers against trade flows originating in the South. We are not opposed to the moderate liberalization of markets regulated by international trade in order to prevent negative effects on sensitive sectors of local economies, but we are opposed to those who preach freedom of trade for

some and then systematically avoid it for themselves as they see fit. Developing countries demand a fair, equitable and transparent environment for international trade that will allow us to reap the benefits of economic globalization.

On the other hand, many developed countries with influence in financial decision-taking circles maintain a purely economic perspective — as opposed to a wider social vision — of the financial difficulties affecting the developing world. They continue to associate a nation's economic health with the vigour of its macroeconomic indicators alone. In fact, no nation can have a healthy economy if a significant sector of its population lives in extreme poverty or if internal growth indicators do not guarantee a sustainable and continued development in the future. Foreign debt still weighs heavily on my country and prevents us from reaching the objectives of sustained economic and social development and environmental protection. With the same constructive spirit as that which guides our trade policies, we are convinced that the institutions of the international financial system should support developing countries' efforts to facilitate their economic advancement and fulfil the commitments of the Earth Summit.

International trade and finance, disarmament and security, environment and development are issues that cannot be considered separately from one another. We know that all the issues in the international agenda are interrelated and we address them separately just for convenience of consideration. In any case, we must never lose sight of the principle of globality and interrelation in the international agenda, or we may run the risk of having an utterly limited historical perspective and objectivity.

Accordingly, Ecuador shares the view of the United Nations Secretary-General on the importance of human rights in the modern world and that all relevant programmes implemented by the Organization must be fully integrated within the scope of activities of the United Nations.

In the case of Ecuador, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that one of the principles of my Administration is to enforce a policy of absolute respect for human rights. I have the ethical conviction that modern civilized life is impossible without individual guarantees and tolerance for diverging opinions. The Ecuadorian State is committed to following this line of conduct and to promoting and protecting all human, civil, cultural,

economic, political and social rights, including the right to development. We are also committed to encouraging inquiry procedures in cases of violations of such rights and to punishing those found liable for them.

The battle against corruption is one of the essential objectives of the National Government in order to ensure that government institutions can recover their respectability and the trust which our people is entitled to place in them.

I wish to refer to a specific aspect related to the human rights issue: the establishment of an international criminal court to punish the most serious crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Ecuador strongly supports this initiative. We share the view that this court should be established by international convention. We therefore urge all States to show the necessary political will to overcome the remaining technical difficulties in order to convene the conference of plenipotentiaries charged with approving the court's statutes.

To conclude, as President of the Republic of Ecuador, I have the pleasure to bring the message of friendship and brotherhood of the Ecuadorian people to this forum, in which all the nations of the world are represented. Our people has consolidated its democracy and balanced its economy and is moving boldly forward to build its future. It is a people that sincerely aspires to ensuring that international mechanisms understand the realities of developing countries. Above all, at this moment in our history, in the face of any potential natural disaster, such as the El Niño phenomenon, we would like to count on the timely, effective and direct cooperation of the United Nations and the various relevant international institutions. I wish to extend once again our message of friendship and fraternity, as well as my country's commitment to the lofty ideals that guide the efforts of the United Nations in the international sphere.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fabián Alarcón Rivera, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Samper Pizano (*interpretation from Spanish*): As President of Colombia and Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your appointment to preside over this most important session, and I also wish to thank Ambassador Razali for his diligence in performing his duties during the fifty-first session of the Assembly.

Over the decades the United Nations has shown that its founders were not mistaken when they entrusted to it the mission of developing a new model of co-existence for our planet, thanks to which we defeated colonialism, fought against apartheid, prevented territorial confrontations, extended our hand to help children, defended the rights of women and protected the environment.

However, we find ourselves today at a crossroads similar to that which led us to sign the San Francisco Charter. The globalization of the world has brought about the internationalization of problems such as drug trafficking, terrorism and corruption, all of which seriously threaten our systems.

Certain industrialized nations are behaving selfishly in defining new rules of the game for free economies. Unilateralism and conditions imposed by the powerful upon others are rampant throughout the world. The spare capacity of the military industrial complex since the cold war is encouraging the beginning of a dangerous arms race. The open wound of foreign debt is still an obstacle to the development of many of the poorest countries. The violation of human, political, social and economic rights is also the order of the day.

The new United Nations, which the Secretary-General has proposed we should reflect upon as the century comes to an end, will surely not deal only with armed conflicts. We must be prepared to face other kinds of war: social war against poverty; judicial war against organized crime; political war against interventionism in our sovereign economies; and moral war against the violation of human rights.

We cannot yet assert that the process of globalization really represents progress for all of humankind. While globalization has generated great economic and technological advances, such progress continues to be the privilege of the industrialized nations and very small segments of the population of the rest of the world. True progress for humanity cannot be brought by phenomena which generate new and more profound imbalances in the quality of life for individuals. We must work hard to ensure that States and multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, direct their efforts to guaranteeing that the benefits of globalization do not remain in the hands of a few.

Therefore, any reform of the United Nations must begin with the return of the concept of solidarity which inspired the San Francisco agreements, and which is the very *raison d'être* of our Movement. We want not more summits, but more compliance with the summits not yet complied with; a summit on compliance with other summits would be welcome.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is not being properly complied with. Important members have yet to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention. There seems to be no interest in making progress on fundamental agreements to restrict the conventional arms markets run by the world's merchants of war. Government aid, as a proportion of the resources transferred to developing countries by developed nations, has dropped from 42 per cent to 24 per cent in recent years. Funds for military operations within the United Nations system have increased 17 times compared with increases in funds for social programmes.

We must find new paths for the United Nations to follow. The reform of the United Nations system proposed by the Secretary-General must encompass all spheres of the United Nations system as a whole.

In the first place, there is the economic sphere. The Bretton Woods organizations — the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — which were born as part of the agreement of March 1946, have progressively been removing themselves from the original direction exercised by this Assembly over their economic and social policies. They have ended up by configuring a development model which they impose on developing economies, without those economies being able to discuss their own priorities. Reform should include matters such as having greater international liquidity, greater flexibility in the management of multilateral debt, concessionary credit flows for social investment and coordination with economic bodies representing the interests of developing countries, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

The situation of the United Nations social sphere is the most worrisome. The greatest burden of the Organization's budgetary crisis has fallen upon the bodies involved, whose financing has dropped by many millions of dollars during the present decade. Some developed countries have inexplicably withdrawn from bodies devoted to children, culture, population, employment and the environment, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. The report of the Secretary-General contains interesting proposals to restore the activities of such bodies, which constitute the very heart of the United Nations.

In a world where 1.3 billion people still survive on less than a dollar a day, in a world where, for the price of one combat plane, 57,000 children in Africa can be fed for a year, it is impossible to conceive of a reform of the United Nations whose priority is not to strengthen the work of its institutions and programmes dedicated to social issues.

Finally, there is the matter of the political relationship between the Assembly and the Security Council. The proposed strengthening of the Security Council cannot be carried out at the expense of taking power away from this Assembly, the highest democratic body of the system. Any expansion of the Council must take into account that developing countries by their

nature and as spokesmen for various regions of the world, need to have greater representation. The instrument of the veto should be abolished because it is anti-democratic, since it places in the hands of one country the power to ignore the will of the majority. If the veto cannot be eliminated, it should be restricted to those matters truly fundamental for world security, and the right to appeal vetoes before judicial or political bodies, such as this Assembly, should be established.

A few months ago the Secretary-General presented to the United Nations a very interesting proposal for the reform for the Organization. The Non-Aligned Movement, which I represent, is reviewing this initiative and considers that a number of its proposals would contribute to the revitalization of the United Nations.

We do not want a United Nations divided between rich and poor, with Members having first- and second-class status according to their economic contributions. The United Nations is not a private company, but the forum of solidarity in which all the countries of the world come together.

I wish to take this opportunity to appeal to the United Nations, and the international community at large, to confront the grave problem of arms proliferation with a clear and well-defined strategy that will lead us to concrete results. To that end, I wish to propose five points for effectively dealing with of this matter.

First, I propose the declaration by the developing countries of a two-year, worldwide moratorium on the high-technology-weapons trade.

Secondly, I propose the expansion of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to include light weapons, as well as production and storage, with a view to strengthening its role as a means of promoting confidence.

Thirdly, I propose that the Governments of arms-producing countries commit themselves to the establishment of a moratorium on the sale of high-technology weapons in regions in conflict, as well as to converting their weapons-production industrial capacity and workforce to other economic sectors.

Fourthly, I propose the follow-up and verification of all multilateral commitments and existing treaties in this area.

Fifthly, I propose that the regulation of trade in light arms, as well as in high-technology weaponry, should be a subject of deliberations at the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

This initiative is designed to deal with the various facets of the grave phenomenon of arms proliferation, which — besides draining vast resources that could be devoted to the social and economic development of our peoples — constitutes the most dangerous threat to the peace and security of the world.

Much water has flowed under the bridge that we built in San Francisco half a century ago to make the world a better place to live.

We have, without any doubt, progressed, but we cannot claim to be satisfied despite what we have achieved. So long as there is a sad, hungry child in the world, there will be a United Nations. So long as there is a weapon raised to kill a neighbour, there will be a United Nations. So long as entire populations are displaced from their homes by violence, hunger and intolerance, there will be a United Nations. So long as thousands of young people do not have access to education because they must struggle every day to survive, there will be a United Nations. So long as the whims of the powerful continue to defy the aspirations of the powerless, there will be a United Nations. So long as drugs on the streets threaten the future of our children, there will be a United Nations. So long as terrorists and violators of human rights continue to run loose, there will be a United Nations. So long as there is a need for solidarity, love and joy in the world, there will be a United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: I now call on the Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, His Excellency Mr. Wolfgang Schüssel.

Mr. Schüssel (Austria): Let me express my pleasure at seeing you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Ukraine — with which Austria has close historical links and enjoys excellent relations — presiding over the General Assembly. We are confident that your profound professional experience in the United Nations system and your negotiating skills will ensure substantial progress in our ambitious agenda.

On behalf of the Federal Government of Austria, I should also like to express our sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose wise leadership of the Organization we fully support. In the short time since he took office he has succeeded in reaching out not only to Governments but also to the people and the media, thus fostering a new awareness about the goals, aspirations and achievements of the United Nations as the indispensable instrument of global cooperation.

My colleague from Luxembourg has already expressed the position of the European Union, which we fully endorse. I should like to elaborate on a few points to which Austria attaches particular importance.

The United Nations is currently preparing itself for the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Secretary-General and his team, with the encouragement of Member States, have initiated comprehensive reform. Austria welcomes this major effort to redirect the Organization towards the needs of the future, and we fully endorse the Secretary-General's proposals. In particular I should like to emphasize the following points: first, the streamlining of leadership and management structure; secondly, the consolidation of the United Nations presence in the field; thirdly, the return of development to the centre of United Nations activities and the better combining of the potential of United Nations funds and programmes; and, fourthly, the strengthening of human rights in all aspects of the work of the United Nations.

Without adequate resources, however, the United Nations will not succeed in carrying out its tasks. As long as Member States do not fully honour their obligations, the financial situation of the Organization will remain critical. Settling the arrears is therefore an imperative. Austria is proud of its traditional record of paying its contributions to the United Nations in full and on time. The serious political will and sincere commitment of every Government will be required. Needless to say, unilateral decisions are unacceptable in the framework of multilateral cooperation.

The fight against drugs, crime and terrorism has rightly become a first priority for the international community. Nearly 1 per cent of the world's population above the age of 15 today has abused stimulants. An estimated 300 tons of heroin a year have been produced during this decade to supply about 8 million addicts. While I hope that regional cooperation will soon contribute effectively to the fight against illegal trafficking and drug abuse, the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen the United Nations capacities in this field deserves the support of all Member States.

Austria will cooperate closely with the newly appointed Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Mr. Pino Arlacchi. We are convinced that his profound knowledge and experience in fighting organized crime will be a strong asset in pooling the resources of the United Nations system, the Member States and relevant institutions. To demonstrate its support, Austria will make a significant financial contribution to the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Trust Fund.

Illegal migration is increasingly linked to transnational crime. The reckless exploitation of humans in distress is a particularly reprehensible form of international crime. An increasing number of people smuggled illegally across borders find themselves helpless victims deprived of all financial means and with an illegal status in a foreign country. The perpetrators, at the same time, earn the profits and escape justice by cynically making use of a loophole in the international criminal law regime. There is an urgent need for an international legal instrument making the smuggling of illegal migrants punishable as a transnational crime, thus ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

I have asked legal experts to prepare a draft international convention against the smuggling of illegal migrants. This draft is being circulated as an official

document under the appropriate agenda item. We propose that the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice consider this draft as a matter of priority at its next session. I am confident that our initiative will help in closing a dangerous legal lacuna, thereby strengthening international judicial cooperation in this field.

Substance abuse and drug-related crimes continue to take a high toll in both the developing and the industrialized worlds. Human and social development is threatened on a global scale. Strengthening and updating existing international anti-drug capacities will require innovation and new methods. In this respect, the special session of the General Assembly devoted to international drug control, which is to be held in June 1998, will provide us with an excellent opportunity to renew our political commitment by closing our ranks against illegal drug trafficking and striving jointly for progress in preventive efforts.

Anti-personnel landmines constitute a particularly malicious threat to the security of individuals and countries. Even decades after the end of a conflict, such as the Second World War, these hidden killers take a terrible toll among civilian populations, killing or maiming more than 20,000 people each and every year. Every year 20 times more mines are laid than cleared. Estimates speak of 110 million mines laid in more than 60 countries. I think that this spiral of death must be stopped.

Austria was one of the first countries to ban anti-personnel landmines at the national level. We strongly advocated a total ban, and we prepared the draft for such a convention. Non-governmental organizations have played a prominent role in creating the necessary momentum, and I would like to thank them respectfully for that on behalf of the Austrian Government. The Oslo Diplomatic Conference negotiated a treaty on this basis, and I look forward to signing the Convention in Ottawa, together with so many of my colleagues who share this goal. I urge the countries that were not able to join the consensus in Oslo to become part of the process as soon as possible.

Ted Turner has generously earmarked a part of his unprecedented \$1 billion donation to support intensified demining efforts. I wish to thank him for this unique gesture.

The dignity and worth of the human person are universal. Consequently, it is the duty of our universal Organization to help implement governmental commitments in this field. Since the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, human rights have moved into the centre of United Nations programmes and activities. Austria welcomes this trend. There is an intrinsic relationship between respect for human rights, democracy and sustainable development. Guaranteeing human rights is an essential precondition for lasting security and stability. This link has been highlighted by the Secretary-General in his commendable report on the work of the Organization.

I take this opportunity to warmly welcome the appointment of President Mary Robinson as High Commissioner for Human Rights and to pledge Austria's full support for her work. Her outstanding personality will undoubtedly contribute to further strengthening the United Nations role in human rights.

The review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights make 1998 the year of human rights. This will provide us with a unique opportunity to shape the international human rights programme for the new millennium. Its central objective must remain that international human rights standards be respected at the level of each nation. For this, the role of Governments is crucial; so is that of civil society. The international community, therefore, not only has to ensure compliance with these commitments and provide the necessary assistance, but it must also promote the role of civil society. We see this year of human rights as an occasion for reaching out to human rights defenders in all corners of the world. As host country of the World Conference and as the country assuming the presidency of the European Union in the second half of 1998, Austria offers its cooperation to ensure a successful human rights year 1998 in all parts of the world.

Austria places great emphasis on the promotion and protection of minorities. We do so on the basis of our historical experience and owing to our conviction that ethnic minorities do not threaten but rather enrich our societies. In this context, I am pleased to refer to the successful solution of an important minority issue. The Austrian minority in South Tyrol today enjoys a well-balanced autonomy on the basis of the Paris Treaty of 1946 between Austria and Italy. This autonomy has generated considerable interest in other parts of the world.

With regard to the human rights year, the implementation of the Beijing Platform continues to be a priority. In particular, Austria supports efforts to strengthen the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We also are contributing to the enhanced practical implementation of other international human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular with regard to juvenile justice.

Employment, as a matter of growing global concern, rightly ranks high on the political agenda. Governments are urged to develop further instruments to fight unemployment through the effective monitoring of labour policies. The World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen provided a set of principles and goals in this respect. In order to confirm these commitments and to identify good practices, I should like to recall that Austria, as a follow-up to Copenhagen, will host an international expert meeting on employment in early February 1998.

In our joint efforts to promote sustainable development, the peaceful use of outer space for the benefit of all countries has become an issue of rapidly growing importance to the United Nations in the last few years. I should like to reaffirm the full support of my country for the United Nations aim to expand activities in this field. We welcome the holding of the third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which will be convened as a special session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, open to all Member States, in Vienna in July 1999.

My country is deeply committed to the peace process in the former Yugoslavia, in particular in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Dayton accords provide the framework for the return of Bosnia to normalcy and stability, for its economic recovery and for reconciliation among its ethnic groups. Full and comprehensive implementation of the Dayton Agreement is therefore imperative. This includes bringing to justice all indicted war criminals, wherever they may be. If we want to safeguard the Dayton process, the international community must remain firmly committed to taking the necessary political, economic and military measures even beyond July 1998. International support must remain conditional on full compliance with all international obligations. I should like to pay a special tribute to the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern

Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, which has made an invaluable contribution to fostering peace in that region.

Austria is in favour of integrating the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fully into the United Nations family as soon as the necessary preconditions, including the application for membership, are fulfilled. In this respect, I stress our expectation that Belgrade will grant a large degree of autonomy to Kosovo and the Albanian minority.

Austria has followed the situation in the Middle East with great concern. We regret the fact that the peace process has come to a near-standstill. The confidence built up by the Oslo process has been largely destroyed. Our main task must be to re-establish and to strengthen this confidence step by step and to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. The present situation increases the risk of extremist activity. A precondition for progress in the peace process will certainly be respect by all parties for the agreements concluded and the engagements undertaken.

Austria is seriously preoccupied by the precarious economic and social situation in the Palestinian territories, where the unemployment rate is 70 per cent. It is of paramount importance to create the necessary economic conditions as a basis for political stability. There will be no lasting peace without a credible response to the economic needs of the people in the region.

Since 1960, Austria has participated very actively in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Considering the growing importance in contemporary peacekeeping of regional arrangements under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, my country has started to cooperate closely with those States and organizations that have taken leading roles in this field. In 1997 Austria provided about 1,200 troops, military observers and civilian police to 11 different peacekeeping operations throughout the world, including the Stabilization Force (SFOR) and the operation in Albania.

Austria actively supports the standby arrangement system, created in 1994, and in this connection took part in establishing the United Nations Stand-by Forces High-Readiness Brigade in December 1996, which was created to build a capacity for quick preventive action and crisis response.

I am deeply convinced that, especially in times of scarce financial resources, the international community should make a greater investment in the field of conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy. The United Nations has the mandate to take a leading role in further developing instruments for preventive diplomacy.

Austria is, and will continue to be, a loyal Member and a strong supporter of the world Organization. The United Nations — our Organization — is the only global instrument that can provide the necessary response to existing global challenges: eradicating poverty; protecting our planet's environment; combating drugs, organized crime and terrorism; and promoting human rights, including the rights of children. To this end we have to strengthen the United Nations.

Address by Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, His Excellency Mr. Abdellatif Filali, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Filali (Morocco) (interpretation from Arabic): First of all, let me say how very pleased I am to congratulate you sincerely, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco, on your election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly — an election that is a token of consideration for your political experience and great competence.

It is also a pleasure for me to salute you, Sir, as the representative of the friendly country of Ukraine, which has solid ties of friendship and full cooperation with the Kingdom of Morocco. I am convinced that your vast experience and excellent command of

international affairs will guarantee the success of our debates and will lead our session to results that open up new prospects of peace, cooperation and prosperity.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I should like to take this opportunity to express to the outgoing President, Mr. Razali Ismail, the representative of the friendly country of Malaysia, our respect and gratitude for his efforts and for having successfully guided the work of our previous session.

I should also like to extend to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, my most sincere congratulations on the confidence placed in him by virtue of his election as Secretary-General, which crowns many years of competent management and tireless effort within the context of the United Nations. His election also reaffirms the deep consideration in which the friendly country of Ghana is held.

Since our last session, the world has been experiencing a period of various political and economic interaction which, unfortunately, has not lived up to mankind's aspirations for bringing the international community closer to tranquillity, security and peace. International relations indeed continue to be fraught with various tensions and disturbances. Thus, on the international scene, new conflicts have emerged which threaten the security, stability and sovereignty of peoples.

Given these challenges, we believe that those problems which emerge in the international arena today can be resolved only through international efforts under the auspices of the United Nations. In this context, we applaud the efforts made by the Secretary-General to reform and restructure the United Nations and improve its working methods in accordance with the requirements of this age. In the same way, we reaffirm our support for all of these efforts aimed at strengthening our Organization and enhancing its effectiveness to allow it to carry out its mission in full, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter.

We firmly believe that the aims of any reform designed to restructure the Organization and rationalize its expenditures can be attained only if due account is taken of the interests of the developing countries and, above all, if reform provides for a solution to their

economic and social problems as well as the provision of material and technical means required for these ends.

With regard to enlargement of the Security Council, we would like to stress the need for consensus and the achievement of balanced and equitable representation of all continents, in particular since the conditions in which United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, were established have now disappeared. The world is now witnessing profound and swift changes which force us to reconsider the composition and role of the Security Council to make it a genuinely effective instrument which is not subject to objectives and interests which contravene the Charter.

The international community welcomed with optimism the peace process which began in the Middle East on the basis of agreements reached between the parties concerned. However, the interruption of this peace process, as a result of the violation by the Government of Israel of all previous commitments and the contravention of all obligations and rules of international conduct now threaten to wipe out all previous efforts to strengthen the foundations for peace in the region.

The violation by the Government of Israel of its commitments was illustrated by its decision to resume its settlement policy and to alter the cultural characteristics and demographic composition of East Jerusalem. This decision is in violation of previous agreements with the Palestinian side. This unilateral and illegitimate decision is also a blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids occupation authorities from effecting any changes in the territories under their control.

Israel, which is still persisting in its refusal to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), has once again brought about an escalation of tension in southern Lebanon, and is continuing to ignore the Syrian proposals to resume negotiations from the point at which they were broken off.

Our vision emanates from our conviction that peace in the region cannot endure or achieve its goals except through equitable treatment which guarantees the mutual interests of all parties and in the context of a region free from weapons of mass destruction.

Convinced as we are of the need to pursue peace efforts, and conduct this process in accordance with the legal framework laid down for it, we would like to stress the need to honour all the obligations stipulated in the agreements signed, and the adherence to credibility in dealings based on such agreements, which will lead to peace and security for all the peoples of the region, and allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and establish their independent State with Al-Quds as its capital.

In this framework, the international community should take the necessary measures to make Israel respect and implement Security Council resolutions.

The stability of the Middle East requires the establishment and consolidation of security in the Gulf region. We deplore the sufferings of the Iraqi people, who are living in extremely harsh conditions as a result of the economic embargo which has been imposed on them for many years now, and we reaffirm that the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995) on "oil for food" is a first step towards lifting the embargo imposed on the Iraqi people. We look forward to the day in the near future which will mark the end of that suffering and the return of Iraq to the exercise of its rights as a member of the Arab family of nations and an active and constructive member of the international community.

Morocco, as a part of the Arab Maghreb region, takes a special interest in the existing dispute between the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and certain western countries because of its negative impact on the regional situation and on the brotherly Libyan people.

Thus, we call for a favourable response to the initiatives undertaken by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the flexibility it has demonstrated, and the efforts exerted by the Arab Maghreb Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement with a view to lifting the sanctions imposed on Libya.

Morocco, which has closely followed the development of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and has contributed, along with other members of the international community, to the initiatives proposed by the chair of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and through participation of Moroccan military units in the Implementation Force and Stabilization Force, expresses its satisfaction at the progress made in the

implementation of the military and civilian aspects of the Dayton Accord, and stresses the need to pursue efforts to ensure its full implementation with a view to establishing the legitimate rights of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to contribute to the reconstruction of the country through provision of the requisite means as agreed by the conferences of donor countries.

As an African nation, and given its age-old and varied relations with other African countries, and furthermore conscious of its obligations to Africa, Morocco expresses deep concern about the deterioration of the political, economic and social conditions in many parts of that continent.

Morocco follows with deep concern the persistence of instability in some parts of Africa, and reaffirms its determination to support and enhance the efforts of the international community to find appropriate and lasting solutions to crises.

On the other hand, the woeful economic situation in Africa is a source of concern for the international community. This situation is particularly reflected in the weak participation of the continent in world trade and in an increase in its debt burden. It is also reflected in a chronically inadequate infrastructure, a serious deterioration in social and health conditions, and, despite the stringent structural reforms introduced by African countries, by the paucity of foreign investment.

In this context, we welcome the initiative taken by Portugal to convene a European-African summit meeting to consider these conditions in the continent and to seek appropriate solutions. We consider that this initiative reflects the awareness of the European Union in respect of its responsibilities with regard to Africa. Morocco therefore proposes the convening of a ministerial meeting to prepare for that summit. Similarly, the Security Council's initiative calling for the convening of a special meeting at the foreign ministerial level to consider the situation in Africa attests to the degree of concern of the international community with regard to the gravity of that situation.

In its relations with all other African countries, Morocco has always adopted policies aimed at effective cooperation, taking into consideration the priorities and the basic needs of our partners.

As a consequence of the profound changes that affected the world economy after the Second World War, it has become current knowledge that the world is today characterized primarily by the globalization of the economy. However, the new challenge which faces the international community today lies in coping with economic and social development issues in all their dimensions, and doing so in harmony with our efforts to achieve peace and security.

The liberalization of world markets and the globalization and comprehensiveness of the world economy have led to a noticeable increase in the volume of trade and financial flows. However, this has not eased the marginalization of developing countries or reduced their debt burden.

Morocco, which has been following with interest the activities of the World Trade Organization (WTO), considers that liberalization of trade must be basically aimed at correcting existing discrepancies and at narrowing the gap between developed and developing countries.

We hope that the second WTO conference, due to take place in Geneva, will provide a new opportunity for the international community which leads to consolidating the bases and rules governing multilateral relations, and to taking decisions likely to reconcile the imperative for trade liberalization and the requirements of development, while responding to the aspirations of developing countries by allowing them, if necessary, to adopt protectionist trade measures.

With regard to the question of the Sahara, Morocco, which cooperated with Mr. James Baker as soon as he was appointed Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, hopes that the results achieved will allow for the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan. In this regard, Morocco, which took the initiative of proposing a referendum in 1981, stresses once more its readiness and desire to cooperate with the United Nations for the achievement of this objective.

The most important achievement of the international community in this century, to which we soon bid farewell, was the end of colonialism in almost all regions of the world. In the past few months, the world has witnessed the return of Hong Kong to its parent country, the People's Republic of China, and Macao will also be so returned in 1999. In the light of the example of Hong

Kong and the plans for the future of Macao, logic now dictates the elimination of all remaining pockets of colonialism throughout the world.

Here I am referring in particular to the Moroccan cities of Sebta and Melilla and the islands adjacent to them, which remain under Spanish domination. Morocco has always believed in the virtues of dialogue as a civilized way of reaching a final settlement to the problem of Sebta and Melilla so as to enable Morocco to regain its sovereignty over those territories while guaranteeing Spain's interests. It was in this context that His Majesty King Hassan II took the initiative in calling for the setting up of a Moroccan-Spanish unit to consider a final solution to this question. This initiative implies a greater rapprochement between the two countries, whose impact would spread to wider and more comprehensive fields.

Humankind is still committed to the noble purposes laid down in the Charter of our Organization. It is therefore incumbent upon us to pursue efforts aiming at the furtherance of those purposes so that, together, in a spirit of confidence and renewed hope, we may bring about a better future for all of humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Clement Rohee, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Rohee (Guyana): For some time now the United Nations has been engaged in a process of reform and restructuring with the aim of improving its capacity to address the many challenges which the world now faces. It has been an arduous and time-consuming exercise which, if truth be told, has diverted us, to some degree, from our primary task of promoting global peace and development. Yet the exercise is a necessary one if we are in fact to enhance the Organization's efficiency and effectiveness and to

gear it for service to the international community in the coming years.

My delegation is confident that, under the able leadership of the President, we will be able to make progress in our endeavours. His wide diplomatic experience, together with his intimate knowledge of the Organization, will serve, I am sure, to orient and accelerate our efforts. We congratulate him on his unanimous election and vouchsafe to him our ready cooperation to make this fifty-second session of the General Assembly a significant turning point in the life of the Organization.

To the President's distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, we convey our deep and sincere appreciation for the determination and dynamism which he brought to bear on the work of the last session. To his great credit, he laboured tirelessly to find general agreement on the steps which must be taken to revitalize the United Nations. His exemplary leadership will no doubt inspire us to fulfil the task at hand without undue delay.

I also wish to acknowledge with appreciation the notable contribution which our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has made to the reform process since taking office. In keeping with the promise made to the Assembly, he has presented us with a set of interesting proposals for the reshaping of the Organization for service in the twenty-first century. This comprehensive and constructive document requires our serious consideration. I intend, therefore, in the time allocated to me, to make a few comments which I trust, despite their brief and preliminary nature, will provide an indication of our thinking at the present time on the ways and means by which the Organization can be reformed.

Let me first say that we share the vision which the Secretary-General has set forth for the future role of the United Nations. The Organization has proved its capacity for preventing major wars and forging international consensus on important aspects of international relations. It is now poised to explore the many possibilities of multilateralism. Increasingly, Member States, large and small, are seeing it in their interest to cooperate with the United Nations to maximize their ability to deal with several international concerns. There is increasing recourse to its machinery in order to deal with such issues as development, the environment, disease, drug trafficking and terrorism, to name just a few. Many of the special agencies, such as the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and others too numerous to mention, cater to the needs of the most vulnerable sections of our population — the aged, women, children and our indigenous peoples.

Built on the pillars of multilateralism, the United Nations offers Member States a unique forum in which they can come together for their common good. Its grand design, elaborated some 50 years ago, remains by and large a useful chart for promoting international comity. It is important, therefore, as we plan for a new era, that we hold fast to the founders' abiding vision lest we be dashed against the rocks of isolation and left to survive as best we can.

The effective translation of this vision into reality requires strong and dynamic leadership. History has shown that, much too often, our most worthwhile aspirations have been left unfulfilled because of inadequate political commitment and direction. States often see the world only through the prism of narrow self-interest and are blind to the virtues of concerted action. However, the challenges of our times, when no single nation, however rich and powerful, can hope to be entirely self-reliant, require the highest level of international cooperation. For it is only by unity of purpose that we, the United Nations, can hope to achieve the aspirations so loftily declared in the Charter.

We are pleased to note that the Secretary-General, as the Organization's chief administrative officer, has demonstrated vision and leadership in outlining his suggestions for reform. Of particular satisfaction to us is the fact that in setting his priorities for the Organization's future work he has accorded high importance to its development activities. At a time when financial support is weak, it is imperative that appropriate strategies be developed to eradicate world poverty and restore economic and social prosperity, particularly in small developing countries.

We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen management capability within the Secretariat to provide for full coordination of effort and for forward planning. We recognize the need for economy, but hope that this will not be to the detriment of clear mandates of Member States and to the fundamental nature of the Organization. It would be a

grave pity if, in reducing costs, the United Nations were to be starved of substance.

We certainly approve of the idea initially propounded by the Government of Japan, and subsequently endorsed by the G-7 countries, calling for administrative savings to be channelled into development activities. This dividend, although presumably limited in quantity, may be significant enough to serve as a catalyst for financing the development account that the Secretary-General proposes. Like the rest of the world, we welcome the generous gift of the Chairman of Turner Communications, who had participated in the 1994 World Hearings on Development and has now seen fit to come out in support of this cause. One can only hope that such philanthropy will be emulated by others in the private sector.

The recently concluded Agenda for Development, together with the joint strategy for development of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), provides a basis for moving forward in the field of economic and social cooperation. Both documents accept the fact that while private investment flows have an important role to play in development, they are, because of their high selectivity and general unpredictability, insufficient to guarantee the development of small disadvantaged countries. For those countries — and here I include my own — development assistance, debt relief, capacity building and increased trade will remain crucial to our progress.

At the macroeconomic level, we will continue to look to the United Nations to play a more central role in the concertation of development policies. The Secretary-General has said,

“The promotion of economic and social progress is one of the United Nations primary objectives, enshrined in the Charter.” (A/51/950, para. 68)

It cannot, consequently, be marginalized in the development process. Instead, it must be its principal generator.

Accordingly, both its structure and operation must be such as to provide “a more integrated collaborative approach”. (*ibid.*, para. 72) Greater coordination of development activities, both at Headquarters and at the regional and local levels, is essential. As has been

suggested, the creation of a new development group and a United Nations development-assistance framework could possibly provide the necessary focus and direction. We should be careful to ensure, however, that the strengths of individual actors and agencies are not lost in any merger.

We fully support the proposal for a closer and more cooperative relationship with the World Bank and other international financial institutions. Over time, those bodies, although connected with the United Nations, have moved away from their original mandates and developed quite independently of the Organization. It is time that those bodies concentrate on human development as distinct from the means of development. We should therefore seek to bring them into line with the main organs of the United Nations. To that end, we encourage the Secretary-General to take whatever steps are needed to achieve that harmonization of the development efforts. We will also have to consider at some stage how to strengthen the relationship of the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the United Nations.

At the same time, we must complement these efforts by giving to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council the direct and overarching responsibility for leading the development enterprise. In the past, those organs have been sadly left behind in the development process. Although useful as forums for dialogue and consensus building, they have failed to engage the key players. We should therefore strive to transform them so that they can provide a stronger political impetus for development and ensure effective global macroeconomic management.

We hope that from this debate will come a clear indication of proposals and recommendations that are considered desirable and feasible. There will be some, of course, which, like the conversion of the Trusteeship Council into a forum for dealing with issues such as the global commons, will require further study. These proposals may be explored in informal working sessions of the Assembly and then taken up formally as a package for approval and subsequent implementation. With diligent cooperation on the part of all, there is no reason why such reforms cannot be agreed upon early in the new year.

Institutional tinkering alone, however, will not guarantee development. The most important dynamic remains the political will of States. The several

strategies that we have forged and the many declarations we have issued over the years remain largely unfulfilled. It is no wonder that poverty is today the single most important threat to global peace and security.

The reduction and eventual elimination of world poverty is an imperative which the United Nations cannot ignore. At the special mid-term review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in June of this year, we came close to agreeing to achieve this target by the year 2015. This year, at the Kyoto session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and later, at the mid-term review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, we will have other opportunities for the further promotion of sustainable development. We should not fail to take advantage of these in our continuing efforts to create a partnership for the benefit of all States.

For its part, my Government remains dedicated to this end. In demonstration of our seriousness of purpose, we have honoured the obligations that have been deemed necessary to national development. As suggested by the World Bank in its publication entitled *Partnership for Sustainable Growth*, we have sought to promote

"global governance in all its aspects, including ensuring the rule of law, improving efficiency and accountability of the public sector and tackling corruption as essential elements of a framework within which economies can prosper."

We have created a truly democratic society in which development is a fundamental human right. The fruit of our policies has been a constant annual growth rate of over 6 per cent. Today, all sectors of our society, including private enterprise and peoples' organizations, are fully involved in the development process and are fired by the optimistic confidence that, as a nation, we will overcome the problems that currently beset us.

In a few weeks, our nation will conduct another democratic election, open again to the scrutiny of international observers. Out of this exercise will come a fresh popular determination to continue along the path leading to economic and social progress. To facilitate this pursuit, the Government has prepared a national development strategy based on a fully participatory economy. Involved in its preparation were experts from both the public and the private sectors, who have

prepared a draft text for wider public consultation and approval. In our view, this provides a useful policy framework which, by establishing needs and priorities, can serve to mobilize assistance from the international community, including donor Governments and international development agencies.

However, as was clearly recognized by our late President, Mr. Cheddi Jagan, the hopes and aspirations of developing countries such as ours will not fully materialize over the long term until the international environment is made more congenial to our needs. Accordingly, he continuously advocated in his lifetime the creation of a new global human order premised on sustainable economic development, equity and social and ecological justice, and based on the creation of a separate global development fund for assistance to both the North and the South. This new North-South partnership must be fashioned in a search for more positive and innovative ways to cope with the vagaries of globalization and liberalization, which are marginalizing millions of people and even many nations.

Guyana has openly embraced the 20/20 initiative adopted at the World Summit for Social Development as a means of sparking international cooperation for development. In addition, we have called for agreement on some forms of international taxation, which, like national revenue at the country level, would provide the funding necessary to promote global development. Thus far, some developed countries have been reluctant to contemplate such innovative means of resource mobilization. But in circumstances of ever increasing international obligations and decreasing development assistance, where will the necessary financing come from? The answer to this question is key to the future of the United Nations, for unless the Organization is endowed with predictable and adequate resources, it will be incapable of satisfying the many requirements placed upon it by Member States.

In my delegation's view, the time has come to deal with this issue. The Economic and Social Council has broached the question in recent high-level discussions, but we are a long way from testing the feasibility of the many ideas that have been advanced to find new and additional ways of financing multilateralism. Initial studies done by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other development agencies have revealed that some of the mechanisms proposed are indeed feasible. Why, then,

are some States unwilling to entertain any meaningful discussion of their introduction? Is it that they are afraid of losing control of the United Nations? Or are they not serious about their proclaimed adherence to the concept of the interdependence of States?

Assuring the financial stability of this Organization must be seen as essential not only to development but to peace. Invariably, instability and conflict within and among States are due in great measure to economic and social instability leading to intense competition for limited resources. An investment in development must therefore be seen as an investment in preventive diplomacy and in the building of peace.

Admittedly, these are costly tasks, but there can be no doubt that the expenditure involved is much less than that resulting from conflict. The international community should therefore be prepared to adequately fund activities in this field to enhance the prospects of their success.

Apart from financial support, there is also a need for more competent supervision by the Security Council. No reform of the United Nations will be complete without reform of the Council, which is the organ primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Unfortunately, despite the most intensive search, we are yet to find general agreement on the basis for restructuring that important body. We must persevere, however, in the fulfilment of our mandate to devise a more effective, open and representative Council fully capable of performing the functions assigned to it under the Charter.

Guyana, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, believes that this aim can best be served by an appropriate expansion in the non-permanent category. However, in a spirit of compromise, we are prepared to contemplate enlargement also in the permanent category, providing a balance can be found between developed- and developing-country representation and agreement reached on the limitation of the use of the veto and on the concept of periodic review. We are ready to continue our work in this direction until a solution is found.

Meanwhile, we are happy to see the progress being made towards the creation of an international criminal court, which will be able to deal effectively with several crimes against humanity.

Last, but by no means least, we wish to see in the campaign for peace more active interest and participation

by this Assembly in the disarmament process, so that the weapons of war may be converted into tools of development. Although we have yet to see any significant peace dividend from the ending of the cold war, we believe that a reduction in arms expenditures on both nuclear and conventional weapons can only benefit the welfare of all peoples. The Assembly must therefore encourage the Committee on Disarmament to intensify its efforts in this field and must itself take whatever action it deems necessary to prompt the conversion from arms production to more peaceful pursuits. Disarmament is too important an issue to be left to the major military Powers. The international community as a whole must therefore exert continuing pressure on the process to achieve the desired results.

At the same time, we must intensify the Organization's role in bringing peace to those countries and regions of the world where conflict or the threat of conflict persists. Upheavals in the Great Lakes region of Africa and the tenuous situation in places such as Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina still defy resolution.

In the Middle East, the peace process seems to have atrophied. The Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict continue to hamper the progress of that entire area. In Cyprus, where tensions are restrained only by the continued presence of United Nations troops, the danger of violence is ever present. On the Korean Peninsula, peaceful reunification is still an elusive goal. The international community has no choice but to do whatever it can to help the parties involved in conflict everywhere to work peacefully towards an amicable settlement of their particular disputes.

The world wants peace and development. It also wants the United Nations to help in the achievement of these goals. Governments have a duty to heed these sentiments and to increase their support of the Organization.

The United Nations itself must in turn reach out to benefit from the valuable reservoir of goodwill which exists towards it among the peoples of the world. Public information is key to securing widespread support for its activities and to expanding its role in international affairs. We therefore urge that the dissemination capacity of the Department of Public Information be enhanced in developed countries, where

awareness of the Organization's potential is less than it should be.

As we approach the major milestone marking the start of the third millennium, we must have a clear vision of what we want the United Nations to be and of what we want it to do. Only with such clarity can we be sure that the reform process will result in a change for the better. It is therefore my delegation's hope that this general debate will engender a common sense of purpose among its Members and a willingness on their part to press forward in the revitalization of an Organization which is so necessary to both our survival and our development.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, His Excellency The Honourable Mr. Lloyd Axworthy.

Mr. Axworthy (Canada): May I first take this opportunity to congratulate my very good friend, the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session and to convey to him the best wishes of Canada for a successful and productive association in this session. I know from our long personal contacts that the course of this important debate is in the best possible hands.

Let me also take the opportunity to thank and congratulate Ambassador Razali for his tireless and effective leadership of the General Assembly at the fifty-first session.

I come to the Assembly today with a sense of urgency and an abiding faith and belief that we are now emerging, not only from the shadows of the cold war, but also from the uncertainties of its aftermath.

(spoke in French)

Around the world, we see countless examples of the basic principles and overall vision of the United Nations Charter being put into practice. The people of the world are laying the foundations of a new international system for the new millennium.

(spoke in English)

Of course, I recognize that no part of the world is without its burdens of conflict, grief and personal suffering. Nor are there any great signs of relief from the growing burden of global economic inequities. What

has changed, however, is the new international willingness to face the issues, to mobilize political will and to launch reforms. There is a sense, not of helplessness, but of hope. The old realities of power have not disappeared, but alongside them have appeared new forces, new coalitions and new ways of doing business — and these forces are impatient. As we have seen, in fact, in recent days, one person's vision and generosity can make a difference and stand as an inspiration to us all.

This new spirit needs to be manifest and inspire the work of the United Nations. The Secretary-General has proposed a serious and far-sighted set of reforms. Canada strongly supports these proposals and accepts them as a package. They promise not simply greater efficiency, but, we hope, greater effectiveness. Based on our experiences in Canada, I can say with some authority that budget-cutting by itself is not the answer. There must be serious structural change to modernize existing institutions, both national and international, that were formed over 50 years ago.

To undertake these reforms, solutions must be based on agreement and cooperation. Solutions cannot be imposed by one country or one group, but rather must be inspired by a sense of openness and innovation. In other words, we must establish a new compact amongst United Nations Members to set this Organization on a sound financial footing. As Mr. Udovenko has said, we are at a watershed, a defining moment for the Organization that can either provide new momentum or stall our advance. The direction we take is ours collectively to decide and the outcome in all our hands. We must not waste this opportunity.

(spoke in French)

Another defining moment, I believe, took place just over a week ago in Oslo. Ninety nations, spurred on by the efforts of the non-governmental organizations, agreed on the text of a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. The treaty will be signed this coming December, just 14 months after it was first conceived.

(spoke in English)

While visiting the treaty discussions in Oslo, I was forcibly struck by how what has become known as the Ottawa process demonstrates the changed character

of world affairs. Above all, it shows how the breakdown of the old bipolar world affords new opportunities for civil society, private individuals, to influence multilateral diplomacy. The focus of the Ottawa process is a weapon that slaughters countless civilians, a weapon that has lost much of its military utility, whatever some may say. This illustrates the growing feeling, coming from the grass roots of the world community, that the engines of war designed for the twentieth century have no place in the twenty-first.

I should say that this is not the only example of the new grass-roots activism which points to the emergence of a global commons as a powerful positive force of globalization. For example, Canadian women, appalled at the treatment of their sisters in Afghanistan, have started a letter-writing campaign. I will be delivering some 5,000 letters today to the Secretary-General, which call on him to take the lead in exposing the gross human rights violations of women in Afghanistan as unacceptable in the eyes of the world's citizens.

The effectiveness of these new forces can be clearly measured. Nations from every region of the world have pledged to sign on to a complete ban on the stockpiling, production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines. We hope to see more join our ranks between now and December. For those who are still on the sidelines, we ask them to think hard and deep on this issue. Their engagement is crucial. By joining us, already a majority of United Nations Member States, they can help rid the world of this most inhumane weapon.

(spoke in French)

Canada recently announced its intention to destroy its remaining stocks of anti-personnel mines before signature of the treaty. We will also shortly ratify the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

(spoke in English)

This treaty constitutes a promise to future generations. But it does not resolve the equally grave problems posed by mines already in the ground, nor does it address the plight of those who have experienced directly their dreadful impact.

Following the signing of the treaty, the international community will have an obligation to develop policies for an enhanced and coordinated approach to

humanitarian demining, and to victim assistance and rehabilitation.

This is, as much as anything else, a development issue. Heavily mined areas of the world cannot pursue economic development until they have been demined; and demining is a hopeless task if there is no treaty to prevent the laying of new mines.

At Ottawa in December, we will invite nations to engage in a second phase of the campaign: a broad mobilization of groups and countries to tackle the aftermath of the landmines crisis. It is a monumental task, to be met only through the combined action of all States. We invite all present to join us. The generosity of private citizens such as Ted Turner, or of the Auto Workers' Union of Canada, and the commitment of those like Princess Diana must be matched, indeed surpassed, by the Governments of this world.

It is important to ask what is behind this willingness to tackle these old problems in a new way? What has brought us to the intersection of high hopes and new strategies, and the real ability to effect change in the world, as exemplified by the landmines campaign? To my mind, these developments and, above all the recognition of the need to adopt new approaches, are in part a response to the changing face of war.

In the second half of the twentieth century, we have seen one type of conflict become prevalent. These are wars fought within, not between, States; wars that tend to be long and bitter; and wars, above all, in which civilians suffer the most and children and women are often deliberately targeted. These are wars in which, in the words of Saint-Exupéry "the firing line passes through the hearts of people".

As this type of war increasingly accounts for the great majority of all conflicts, the distinctions that once informed the work of international diplomacy — between military security concerns and humanitarian or civil concerns — break down. This blurring of the lines, along with heightened media presence, has strongly affected international opinion. Fewer and fewer people are willing to view war as an acceptable instrument of state policy.

In the light of these changes, the concept of human security, which I highlighted when I addressed the Assembly last year, takes on growing relevance. It

is based on the premise that it is not enough to spare people from the "scourge of war" narrowly defined. Ensuring true, sustainable human security means tackling other severe threats: the unmet needs of more than a billion people living in poverty; attacks on human rights of individuals and groups within society; transnational threats, such as crime and terrorism; and threats to health and livelihood through depletion or pollution of our resources.

The problems of these new global issues will not wait for long-term solutions. It is urgent that we take action to prevent or reduce the incidence of conflict, to restore societies in the aftermath of conflict and to increase human security around the world.

The priorities for action can, in my view, be grouped under three main headings: addressing issues which cut across traditional boundaries between areas of concern, such as we have in the landmines campaign; identifying and addressing the root causes of conflict; and improving our ability to respond to crises when we cannot prevent them.

Let me talk about that first priority. Landmines are not the only complex, cross-cutting problem to be addressed if we are to reduce the impact of conflict. All too often it is small arms, rather than the major weapons systems targeted by our disarmament efforts, that cause the greatest bloodshed. In the hands of terrorists, criminals, the irregular militia and armed bands typical of internal conflict, these are the true weapons of mass terror. As with landmines, their victims are all too often civilians.

We welcome the recent report of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and discussions within the United Nations Disarmament Commission on disarming combatants as a step towards more lasting peace. These should serve as the launching pad from which to develop practical measures, in consultation with regional bodies.

(spoke in French)

To tackle this problem, the first steps must be to combat illicit trafficking in firearms and to bring greater transparency to the legal exportation of small arms. The Organization of American States (OAS) is currently working towards an Inter-American convention on illicit trafficking in firearms. Canada hopes that the OAS

negotiations will result in an effective convention and will also inspire other regional bodies to take action.

(spoke in English)

Ridding the world of anti-personnel landmines and banning or limiting other forms of weapons directly reduce the human suffering caused by conflict. The other side of the same coin is building and enhancing human security. By building peace, reducing unsustainable military expenditures, promoting equitable and sustainable development and encouraging stable, democratic societies which respect human rights, we not only limit human suffering, but we also address the root causes of conflict itself.

To do this requires solutions that are built from the inside, not imposed from the outside. Sustainable peace can be built only through the active cooperation and participation of Governments, peoples, and groups caught in the conflict itself.

At the same time, a parallel effort is required to reform the United Nations development funds and programmes. Canada strongly supports the Secretary-General's reform proposals in this area. We place priority on improving coordination within the United Nations system at the country level, including among the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, in order to maximize development impact.

Canada, through diplomacy and development assistance, has supported peace-building activities in certain regions for many years. To give further impetus to this approach, last October I announced the Canadian peace-building initiative. Its aim is to coordinate Canadian programmes and policies in support of conflict prevention and resolution, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. A peace-building mechanism or fund has provided a rapid response mechanism in areas of conflict.

Over the last six months, we have used this peace-building fund for the following purposes: to provide critical start-up funding for the historical clarification Commission in Guatemala; to assist the preparatory commission for the establishment of an international criminal court by underwriting the participation of delegates from developing countries; and to provide financial assistance for the work of the joint United Nations/Organization of African Unity (OAU) Special

Representative for the Great Lakes region of Africa,
Mr. Mohamed Sahnoun.

In addition, Canada is prepared to contribute up to \$500,000 from this fund for the establishment in Bosnia and Herzegovina of a non-governmental organization foundation to develop civil society on the basis of multi-ethnic cooperation. I urge other members to join us in supporting this foundation.

Finally, I am pleased to announce a Canadian contribution of \$500,000 from the peace-building fund to the new United Nations Trust Fund for Preventive Action, created by the Secretary-General in response to a proposal from the Norwegian Government.

A second promising area of work on the root causes of conflict lies in exploring the links between security and development, and particularly in reducing levels of military expenditures relative to economic and social spending. Last year Canada sponsored, together with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) a symposium on military expenditures in developing countries which brought together a wide range of experts who identified areas for further action: small-arms proliferation, about which I have just spoken, regional security, good governance and the rule of law.

The United Nations has established important tools to build the confidence necessary for reductions in military spending, in the form of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations standardized reports on national military expenditures. Much more work is needed, particularly at the regional level, to identify ways to reduce military spending and to redirect scarce national resources to the economic and social development goals.

A third area of attention is work on conflict that comes from threats to environmental sustainability. Environmental problems have the capacity to imperil living standards and to endanger the well-being of future generations. For these reasons, Canada strongly supports new agreements on hazardous chemicals, including persistent organic pollutants, and will work to ensure the success of the new intergovernmental forum on forests. Combating desertification also remains a priority for us, and we have offered to host the Desertification Convention secretariat.

The fourth and final promising area in addressing the root causes of conflict is human rights and good governance. Next year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is an opportunity for all of us to reaffirm strongly the fundamental importance of this document and our commitment to the common standards it sets out.

In recognition of the importance of this anniversary, Canada will be sponsoring a broad programme of activities, including a major world conference on human rights and the Internet, to draw together work being done in many international forums, with a focus on strategies for using the new international telecommunications technology to increase respect for human rights. We are working on the development and publication of an annual report on the state of human rights worldwide, based on the findings of the United Nations independent human rights mechanisms. And we will hold a conference reviewing the impact of the 1993 Vienna Declaration, to be held by Canadian non-governmental organizations.

Abuse of human rights is sometimes excused as necessary in the interests of stability and national security, but the facts show otherwise. Countries with democratic governments which respect the fundamental rights of their citizens are less likely to wage war on one another. They are also more likely over time to achieve high levels of economic development.

(spoke in French)

Recognizing this, Canada has recently undertaken a series of new bilateral human rights initiatives. Our aim is to work with our counterparts in other countries to establish discussions between governments to foster exchanges between institutions devoted to the protection of human rights and civil-society initiatives and projects for the development of free media.

(spoke in English)

We also fully support the Secretary-General's proposals for reform measures to enhance United Nations work in human rights. And we welcome the appointment of Mary Robinson as High Commissioner for Human Rights, and offer her our support.

As we move towards the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the

challenges facing the international community, if anything, have increased. The trend towards targeting civilians in warfare has resulted in severe infringements of the basic rights of women and children. Too often we have seen children recruited as soldiers or women subjected to sexual assault as a deliberate weapon of terror.

Canada continues to make the rights of the child and of women, both in conflict and in peace, a top human rights priority, which we pursue actively in the United Nations and elsewhere. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Olara Otunnu as Special Representative to study the impact of armed conflict on children. We will shortly host a preparatory meeting for the main donor countries invited to the Oslo child labour conference. And domestically we have launched a Child Labour Challenge Fund to support the efforts of our private sector to address the problem of exploitative child labour.

Nowhere is the link between human rights and human security clearer than in the issue of children's rights. By protecting the basic rights of the world's children, we are nurturing a future generation of citizens with both the means and the desire to live in peace.

The final overall priority for action is crisis response. And despite our best efforts, there will be times when conflict looms, or when it cannot be prevented. These situations call for rapid, decisive action, whether to forestall conflict or contain it when it breaks out. These actions include not only peacekeeping and other military measures, but also humanitarian and judicial responses.

To date, the international community appears to have identified the lessons that the missions to Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Zaire have taught us, but not to have learned from them. In crisis situations, speed is the key to effective response. This is why Canada has been so active in efforts to develop a United Nations rapid-response and deployment capability, in particular a rapidly deployable mission headquarters here in New York. This would not only permit the timely insertion of military forces, but also integrate civilian and humanitarian organizations into mission planning and deployment.

Canada hopes to see measurable progress on the rapidly deployable headquarters and on the Danish-led Standby Forces High-Readiness Brigade initiative. These

improvements to the United Nations rapid-response capability are complementary, feasible and should be implemented without delay. Let us learn our lesson, and not ignore it once again.

In addition to rapid military and humanitarian reaction, a key element of the United Nations response to conflict is the application of justice and the international rule of law. Canada strongly supports the timely establishment of an independent, effective international criminal court. In order to be effective, the court must have inherent jurisdiction over the core crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. In order to be independent, the court must not be precluded from dealing with matters on the Security Council agenda.

In conclusion, let me say that, as we all recognize, the United Nations was originally established as an instrument of international peace. Since that time, war has put on a new face. More and more, it has targeted primarily civilian populations. If the United Nations is to be effective — and I believe that the need for effective multilateralism has never been greater — the United Nations must adapt to this changing face of war.

At the same time, the United Nations must also recognize that it, too, has changed at its very foundation. Both its membership and its mandate have expanded, and the growing importance of United Nations development and humanitarian activities have made their mark. Clearly, it is time for concerted reflection on the purpose and functioning of this body that we have built together — including on the difficult issues of financing and reform of the Security Council.

The reform and expansion of the Security Council is a major undertaking of direct concern to all Member States. The long-term implications must be fully debated and carefully weighed, and the process must be fair and open. It must attract a broad consensus and cannot be rushed to accommodate other goals — including a short-term solution to the United Nations financial crisis. Canada wants to see a Security Council that is effective, transparent, broadly representative and, above all, less elitist and more democratic. The primary criteria for membership should be commitment to the ideals and undertakings of the United Nations and a willingness to remain always accountable to the full membership of this Assembly.

Broader United Nations reform must necessarily fail so long as Member States continue to demand more of a system to which they contribute less. Effective leadership and moral authority are rooted in respect for undertakings and obligations freely entered into by Member States. It is the responsibility of each and every Member to pay its dues. These obligations apply in full, on time and without conditions.

Looking ahead, there may be a time when we will choose to reconsider aspects of the current financial underpinnings of the United Nations. Indeed, we may collectively decide that in order to broaden responsibilities and share power in ways that better reflect current international realities, some adjustments to the scale of assessments are warranted. Such decisions, however, can be neither prejudged nor presumed, and would no doubt be influenced by the commitment of those advocating such changes to the broader purposes of this Organization.

The international context in which the United Nations functions has changed profoundly. Around the world, people are reshaping the way they live — be it by seeking more food, better air or greater democracy. Crucial to this massive transformation is the search for security, through both the reduction of conflict and the building of a better life in times of peace. The United Nations has long symbolized these dual hopes, for escape from “the scourge of war” and for “better standards of life in larger freedom”.

I close my remarks today on a note of hope, quoting President Václav Havel of the Czech Republic, who said,

“Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not a conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”

Our hope lies in the certainty that the United Nations, as the standard-bearer of international values, of a sense of multilateralism and of a sense of cooperation and partnership, makes sense for all of us. This must spur us on in this Assembly for the challenges that lie ahead.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, His Excellency Mr. Ray Burke. I give him the floor.

Mr. Burke (Ireland): I would like to offer Foreign Minister Udovenko of Ukraine my warmest congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. His skill and experience will serve us well in directing the vital work to be undertaken at this session. Ireland, and you, Ambassador Campbell as Vice-President of the General Assembly, will spare no effort in assisting the President in the important tasks of his office.

I also wish to thank Ambassador Razali Ismail for the energy and commitment he devoted to guiding the Assembly at its last session.

My colleague Foreign Minister Poos of Luxembourg, speaking on behalf of the European Union, set out clearly in his speech to the Assembly the agenda for action by the United Nations and its Member States in facing the challenges of the world today. Ireland associates itself fully with his remarks.

This session is a crucial one for the United Nations. Decisions must be taken to make the United Nations more effective in meeting its real objectives and priorities in future years. The Secretary-General has presented us with a considered, balanced and substantial package of proposals for United Nations reform. This package marks a turning point in the reform and revitalization process. The Secretary-General has recognized that the future of the United Nations can be secured only by a clearer focus and better coordination of effort, expertise and resources on the key priorities — real peace and security, sustainable development, equitable economic and social progress, humanitarian action and, underlying all of these, the safeguarding of universal human rights.

Ireland welcomes in particular the proposals for a more concerted effort in the economic and social development sector. Together with our European Union partners, we have been developing our own contribution in this area. Our aim is a more effective and coherent United Nations effort which would finally make real inroads, particularly in the least developed countries, in the fight against poverty and underdevelopment. We welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to channel the resources saved in this exercise to development programmes of the Organization.

I know that some will feel that the proposals do not go far enough in one direction, and others in another. It is not possible to accommodate fully all

concerns. But there is enough in these proposals to make the start on reform that we have all been looking for. I therefore earnestly appeal to all Member States to join this broad consensus of support.

We should also, at this session, work to achieve a solution to the difficult questions of the financing of the United Nations and of the enlargement and working methods of the Security Council. Ireland, my country, has declared its candidacy for the Security Council in the year 2000. We shall do everything possible to earn support for our candidacy.

Living through times of dramatic change is rarely easy. Globalization and liberalization of the international economy have brought significant benefits to many countries and are changing the shape of our world. Some developing countries have benefited from these processes and made significant economic and social strides. Others, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, have become even more marginalized from the world economy, and this is unacceptable.

Ireland has been increasing its official-development-assistance budget over a number of years. My Government is committed to making steady progress towards achieving the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent in our development-cooperation assistance. Specifically, we are committed to having Irish aid reach 0.45 per cent of gross national product by 2002.

Some critics contend that development cooperation has not succeeded. The best response to this is to point to what it has already achieved. In regard to the most fundamental of all human rights, life expectancy around the world has increased by a third in the past three decades; infant mortality has been cut in half. These are not small achievements.

In our present globalized and increasingly interdependent world economy, we need to seek a new partnership between developed and developing countries to address those issues which affect the entire international community. In this the United Nations has an indispensable role to play, and we pledge our full support to assist the Secretary-General in his task.

In June 1998 the General Assembly will meet in special session to address the drugs issue, both at the national and international levels. I had the honour, as Minister of Justice and in the role of President of the Council of Ministers of the European Union, to address

the General Assembly on this question in 1990. The Assembly has regularly considered further action to deal with this menace. But the action that has been taken so far has clearly been inadequate. We must redouble our efforts. Drugs are an international cancer which threaten the lives of the present and future generations, particularly our young. For all our people, they pose a real threat to the very fabric of society.

Last week saw the conclusion of negotiations in Oslo on a global Convention banning landmines, without reservation, without exception and for all time. This major step forward will be particularly welcomed by those countries which have suffered so much as a result of the use of these barbaric devices. Those countries not present there and not yet ready to sign in December must take account of the widespread international support for this agreement. We appeal to them to help ensure the maximum degree of adherence to the Convention. The international community must now work together with ever greater determination to provide for the clearing of mines already placed and for the care and rehabilitation, as well as the social and economic reintegration, of mine victims.

In 1961, when the then-Foreign Minister of Ireland, Mr. Frank Aiken, introduced a resolution at the sixteenth session of the General Assembly calling for the conclusion of an international agreement that would prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, he launched a process which the Irish Government firmly believed would eventually lead to total nuclear disarmament. Then as now, our conviction was that genuine international peace and security can never be achieved as long as nuclear weapons remain part of the armouries of States.

We welcome the achievements of recent years, whether bilateral or multilateral: the START Treaties, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the global ban outlawing chemical weapons and present efforts to strengthen the ban on biological and toxin weapons. These show that with the necessary will progress is possible.

Now is the time for serious consideration of an integrated approach, encompassing both bilateral and multilateral negotiations, culminating in an international agreement on a total ban on nuclear weapons. We must inject a real sense of urgency into translating the goal of the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons into a more concrete reality. My plea is for reflection on the

part of all; for compromise and for cooperation, and for a flexible rather than a dogmatic approach. I believe that we can offer no better vision, courage and leadership in the service of peace than to take up this challenge.

While we can look forward one day to a world free of nuclear weapons, no time should be lost in agreeing how the peaceful uses of nuclear energy can best be managed. We in Ireland live in close proximity to a nuclear-fuel reprocessing plant which poses a considerable threat to us because of the ever-present risk of a major accident at the plant. In many countries today, nuclear energy is viewed with alarm and apprehension. Public resistance has persuaded some Governments to renounce the nuclear option because the benefits of nuclear energy have failed to convince a sceptical and questioning public.

The impact of accidents involving nuclear-power reactors can cross international frontiers. The legitimate interests of States affected by such accidents demand that high priority be given to strengthening nuclear safety worldwide. Reactor safety and the closure of sub-standard reactors represent for my Government fundamental necessities that nuclear-energy States must meet.

It is simply unacceptable that poor management of radioactive waste and spent fuel should threaten the health and safety of populations or cause serious long-term damage to the environment of States which have no nuclear programmes. The recent Joint Convention dealing with these matters will hopefully bring about improvements. However, much more needs to be done through international cooperation to allay the deep misgivings of a concerned public.

Transport of nuclear materials and radioactive waste raises the most serious and justifiable fears. We must insist that this, along with all other nuclear activities, be carried out in strict accordance with the highest international standards of safety and security. Furthermore, the entirely legitimate sensitivities of transit countries affected by such movements must be recognized.

As we approach next year's celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we must recognize that we have fallen short in implementing the goals and aspirations of the Declaration. While recognizing that none of us has grounds for complacency in this regard, it is a reality

that the human rights situation in certain countries remains of particular concern to the international community. The European Union, in its memorandum to the General Assembly, has listed the areas of particular concern to us, including the human rights situation in Myanmar, East Timor, Nigeria and Afghanistan, to name but a few.

We must all work together — Governments and non-governmental organizations and civil society generally — in dialogue and partnership to ensure that the human rights principles enshrined in the Charter and the Universal Declaration are respected to the full.

The current reforms proposed by the Secretary-General, in particular his decision to consolidate the two existing human rights offices into a single office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, are to be welcomed. They provide a clear opportunity to strengthen significantly the human rights programme of the United Nations by fully integrating human rights issues across the full range of United Nations activities. It is a cause of great pride to the Government and the people of Ireland that the Secretary-General has chosen Mrs. Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland, as the new High Commissioner.

I wish to turn now to an area of United Nations activity which is of particular concern and interest to my country — that of peacekeeping. Ireland has a proud record of service in almost every major United Nations peacekeeping operation. We will continue this role, including our contribution of personnel from the Irish police force — the Garda Síochána — to the new and important role for civilian police in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Our peacekeepers have at times paid a heavy price: some 75 Irish peacekeepers have died in the service of United Nations peacekeeping.

Our support for the role of the United Nations in its peacekeeping role has not wavered. But it is tempered by the sober recognition that, despite many significant successes in past decades, United Nations peacekeeping, particularly in recent times, has not always been effective. We must become better at averting conflicts, through more vigorous preventive diplomacy and action in dealing with the roots of conflict. When we are forced to intervene, our response must be prompt and better informed through effective early warning systems. Our tasks and

objectives must be better defined, both as regards keeping the peace and making the peace. The full support, political and material, of the Member States is essential if they are to be achieved effectively.

Too often the United Nations has been asked, to its cost, to keep the peace indefinitely in conflict areas, without any corresponding efforts by the parties to the conflict to make peace. All Member States of this Organization have a responsibility to ensure continuous and honest efforts to make the peace permanent.

The changing international situation of the last decade has seen the emergence of new sources of conflict and tension. Old ethnic rivalries and hatreds have resurfaced, leading to new local and regional conflicts. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the killing has stopped, but progress in building the peace has been painfully slow. In the Middle East, too, moving the peace process forward is proving enormously more difficult than could have been imagined. We call on all parties to live up to their responsibilities and put the process back on track. In Cyprus, in the Great Lakes region of Africa and in many other places, the serious efforts of the international community to secure lasting peace are making very slow headway.

In the island of Ireland, we face the task of forging reconciliation and, leaving behind us the bitterness of history, ensuring that the root causes of the threat to peace are addressed effectively.

Successive Irish Foreign Ministers have addressed this Assembly over the years and informed representatives of the efforts being made to resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland and bring about a lasting peaceful settlement. They have brought news of significant advances, from the launching of the intergovernmental approach by Ireland and Britain in 1980 and the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985, to the formulation of the Joint Declaration in 1993 and the publication of the Joint Framework document in 1995.

I now bring to the Assembly the joyous news that yesterday in Belfast we succeeded in launching substantial and historic all-party talks in which the future of a peaceful and agreed Ireland is to be mapped out. What is notable about all of these developments — each an important foundation stone in the current peace process — is that they were undertaken in partnership between the Irish and British Governments. Progress has

been driven by our two Governments, united in the quest for peace and a lasting and just settlement. That progress has been defined and directed by the concept of the “totality of relationships”, with which our two islands are intertwined and which bears directly on the question of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland represents the interface between the respective traditions and future aspirations of both Ireland and Britain. Only in the totality of our relations can we come to terms with our differing visions of the past and reconcile our hopes for the future.

The notion of the “totality of relationships” has been reinforced recently by profound shifts in political and social attitudes in both Ireland and Britain. The character of these shifts has much in common in that they serve to illustrate the commonality that the peoples of Ireland and Britain share.

Ireland has been undergoing a dramatic and invigorating process of renewal. This has been most evident in our economic performance, but it is evident too in our social and cultural life. I have a deep sense that it has been encouraged and shaped by our involvement in the evolution of Europe and the development of our multilateral relations through the United Nations itself. This renewal has been marked by inspiration about what can be done and by what is needed pragmatically to achieve what we set out to do.

In Britain, there has been a dramatic development which redefines and reshapes the nature of its political union. And we too detect that same impulse to reinvigorate the institutions of the state, to undertake a reappraisal and a renewal as the new millennium approaches.

I believe that this sense of change in both islands, this quickening pace, will be a very important factor as both Governments and all the parties to the negotiations in Northern Ireland take the peace process forward. It will, I believe, impart an urgency and focus to the deliberations. More importantly, it means that those who form part of the talks process have the opportunity to shape their future rather than surrender through indifference or apathy to the inexorability of change.

For we live in a time which offers an invitation to shape our common future. That invitation is open to all those with the courage and vision to participate in the talks process, which seeks to reshape the relations which are central to the solution we seek — relations

between the two communities in Northern Ireland, relations between the North and the South of our island, and relations between Ireland and Britain.

The efforts of both Governments to construct the complex structures on which to base a peace process were undertaken with the very clear acknowledgment that ultimately it was there to serve all the parties most directly involved in the conflict and, through them, the wider community. As the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), John Hume, so clearly recognized, it had to be an inclusive peace process if it was to be a lasting one.

Creating the conditions for this inclusive process was a difficult task in the face of continued violence by paramilitaries on both sides — violence which has been ongoing for over 25 years; violence which threatened to limit the boundaries of a whole generation to suspicion, mutual mistrust and division; violence which still seeks to threaten and disrupt our efforts to build a lasting peace.

The task of creating an inclusive peace process required us to call on our friends in the international community. I want to acknowledge those friends, particularly in the European Union, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, most important, in the United States.

The partnership between Ireland and Britain has been consistently encouraged and assisted by the United States under the leadership of President Clinton and with the backing of friends and supporters in the United States Congress. In particular, President Clinton offered his personal support and active engagement in the search for peace. The President undertook to share the risks for peace which were being taken by both Governments. And in doing so, he added significantly to the momentum which secured the ceasefire in 1994 and re-established it in July of this year.

The United States has been a resource offered generously in the name of peace. I want to acknowledge the invaluable role played by Senator George Mitchell in chairing the multi-party talks in Belfast. And I also want to express my Government's appreciation for the cooperation and assistance provided by the Governments of Finland and Canada, particularly by making available as co-chairmen of the talks former Prime Minister Harri Holkeri and General John de Chastelain. They have shown unfailing forbearance and unremitting commitment to this delicate and complex process.

With this help, and with the resolve of both Governments to ensure that an unequivocal ceasefire was a necessary condition for involvement in the talks process, another ceasefire was, as I said earlier, established in July this year. Because the ceasefire has been re-established, all parties to the problem of Northern Ireland have now been invited to join the talks process in Belfast and to begin the task of shaping our respective interwoven futures.

We have, in the course of the Anglo-Irish peace process, sought to accomplish the purpose for which this Assembly was established — to replace mistrust and violent confrontation with dialogue, negotiation and agreement between all the parties to conflict. We do not underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead. As the history of the United Nations itself has shown, major conflicts have, for the most part, been avoided. However, the resolution of localized conflicts has proven elusive and problematic.

The principles, purpose and practice of this Assembly and the United Nations itself were formed to replace conflict — of whatever scale — with peace through dialogue. In our approach to Northern Ireland, we have been guided by the same impulse to create principles, purposes and practices which will replace the method and means of sectarian hatred and intercommunal violence.

We have made it clear that in our talks, all issues are on the table, that no outcome is ruled out of bounds for discussion or is predetermined. We have constructed a process and rules of procedure by which the parties can discuss, refine and eventually agree on the structures which will embrace the totality of relations on the two islands and which command the consent of both unionists and nationalists in Ireland.

We have established as an integral part of the dialogue that we recognize the rights and wishes of the unionist community in the same way as we insist that parity of esteem for Nationalists is a necessary and just component of any eventual settlement.

We have set out our view that the resolution of the issue of the decommissioning of arms is an indispensable part of the process of negotiation. We have emphatically declared, in our insistence on adherence to the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence, that only those committed to democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political

issues and those who renounce force or the threat of force to influence the outcome of the negotiations can be a party to the talks process.

We have embraced as a founding principle in the current talks process and its eventual outcome that any agreement must command sufficient consensus between both sets of participants. We have accepted that the agreement reached will be put to the people of Ireland, North and South, for their approval.

Both Governments have set a target to conclude these talks by next May and present proposals to the people of Ireland, North and South, in parallel referendums. I believe that this target is necessarily ambitious and realistically achievable.

We may well have setbacks in the interim. We certainly have difficult issues to confront and compromises to make which will require courage and vision.

But both Governments — and I believe the parties currently in the talks process — are collectively determined that this process will be pursued, that there will be no going back, and that the future we seek of harmonious relations and an honourable and comprehensive agreement will be secured and that lasting peace will be brought to our island.

The Acting President: I give the floor now to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, His Excellency Mr. Erik Derycke.

Mr. Derycke (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate Minister Udovenko, our colleague from Ukraine, on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly and to express my most sincere thanks to Ambassador Razali of Malaysia for the invaluable work he helped us achieve during the fifty-first session of the Assembly.

It is clear that the way in which we organize ourselves as a world community is of the utmost importance for questions of war and peace, poverty and wealth, and justice and injustice in the world.

The United Nations Secretariat and the leadership of our Organization have a key role in this regard. All those serving United Nations institutions deserve our gratitude for the way in which they carry out their work,

both here in New York and in the field, often in precarious situations in which some have even lost their lives.

But we should ask whether we, the Member States, have done enough to find common responses. Have we given the United Nations the necessary tools for comprehensive management? Have we not blamed the Organization for a lack of success in some of its endeavours, when they may have been doomed to failure anyway because there was not enough support from Member States?

We must be fully aware that, as Member States, we sometimes try to impose tasks upon the Organization which are beyond its capabilities, while we are all too often slow to provide help and support whenever and wherever it is really needed. More than once we have seen — in Africa, for example — that the United Nations has had to spread itself too thinly over vast distances and that adequate support for a United Nations role has not been forthcoming from Member States, which has weakened the United Nations ability to react when a dynamic response was needed in crisis situations.

Has not the time come, during this session, to ensure that the Organization can act with renewed vigour and reconfirm its authority? I am convinced that the answer to this question should be positive, and that we should, like the President of the European Union and other previous speakers, throw our full weight behind the Secretary-General's proposals to prepare the Organization more effectively for the coming millennium.

More efficiency and coordination, greater cohesion and better cooperation between Headquarters and agencies in the field are minimal changes, but fully justified. However, we need to do more because this year we must resolve the United Nations financial crisis.

It is unacceptable that Member States should not pay their dues in full and that they attach conditions to the payment of what they owe. All the speakers in the general debate should be able to proclaim from this rostrum not just that they want to improve the Organization's efficiency and that they support the Secretary-General in his efforts to that end, but also that their contributions have been paid in full,

unconditionally, thus proving their commitment to the goals of the United Nations and our common agenda.

The President returned to the Chair.

There can be no doubt that this agenda includes the achievements of the 12 United Nations conferences which, from the 1990 World Summit for Children to the 1996 World Food Summit, have paved the way for the current agenda in the area of international development. But responsibilities have often been distributed injudiciously and too widely, while mandates have proved insufficient. A more integrated approach in the social and economic sector has in any case become necessary. I therefore welcome the fact that the Secretary-General's proposals for reform pay particular attention to development, and I subscribe fully to his proposals.

Furthermore, a well-balanced expansion of the Security Council should be achieved without delay. Belgium, together with a number of like-minded countries that share the general concern with regard to strengthening the authority of the Security Council, has clearly stated its views here in New York. We advocate an increase in both permanent and non-permanent members, greater regional representativeness, enhanced Council efficiency and a limitation of the right of veto. The right of veto is incompatible with the general interest. It should be possible to modify the decision-making mechanism so as to avoid recourse to this instrument, which has become entirely obsolete. Belgium also pleads for more transparency and closer cooperation between the Security Council and countries contributing to peacekeeping operations.

Such organizational and financial reform can succeed only if it can rely upon a team of officials who see themselves as being at the service of the Organization and of the common good. Ultimately, an Organization reformed along these lines and better able to meet global challenges will have to strengthen its ties with and complement regional organizations, not only in the political field but also at the social and economic level. It will not be possible to make our world more humane without the joint effort of all international organizations in support of a global approach. In this effort, the United Nations, together with regional and specialized institutions, is a beacon of hope for millions of people. Strengthening the United Nations also means strengthening its ties with other organizations and

associations so that they can keep pace with the overall reshaping of our Organization and of our world vision.

I should like to provide two examples. With regard to its policy on Africa, Belgium again stresses the need for an objective approach on the one hand and accountability on the other. The approach that we wish to promote is based on universal principles, the most important of which is that of human rights sustained by mutual respect based on equality. It is high time that we progressed to true mental decolonization. Efforts originating in the region itself should be given every chance to prosper and should be fully recognized by the international community. As for Central Africa in particular, our common efforts should give priority to the reconstruction and democratization of the Congo, in the interests not only of that country and its people, but of stability in the Great Lakes region as a whole.

On the other hand, in certain areas, such as Eastern Slavonia, United Nations "blue helmets" have succeeded in separating warring parties, protecting populations and preparing for reconstruction. It is therefore the responsibility first of the parties themselves and then of the international community to make every effort to prevent these achievements from slipping away. By extension, this is also true for the region as a whole. With regard to Eastern Slavonia in particular, it is important for the activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to be based on the accomplishments of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) and for such activities to be inspired by and based upon United Nations experience in the region.

I should now like to focus on another contemporary issue: disarmament. Needless to say, weapons of mass destruction should be forbidden. But this is also true for weapons whose sole purpose is to destroy human beings, such as anti-personnel landmines. In Angola, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Cambodia and elsewhere, these indiscriminate and cowardly weapons kill some 9,600 people and maim another 14,000 every year. They kill and mutilate more people than all the weapons of mass destruction put together.

It is high time that these devices were banned. In less than two years the objective of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines has met with a positive response in most parts of the world. Belgium, which was keen to play a leading role in this field, fully

supports this objective. As chairman of the international conference on a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, which took place in Brussels in June, I myself noted the existence of the political will necessary to achieve a ban by the end of 1997.

The recent conclusion in Oslo of the negotiations on a legally binding instrument means that most of us will be able to go to Ottawa in early December to sign this important treaty. My country made a great effort to ensure that we produced a strong legal instrument, with no exceptions or reservations, and we also advocated that assistance to landmine victims should be an essential part of this convention. Belgium is pleased to note that this international humanitarian standard will soon become a reality and invites all other States to join in the effort. It is also my firm hope that States will not wait for the treaty to come into force before they honour this total ban.

Humanitarian tragedies will continue to occur throughout the world. Whatever their origins, crises are become increasingly complicated. Still considerable in number, they create countless victims and immense human suffering. Despite greater solidarity and increased humanitarian assistance granted by a growing number of humanitarian and non-governmental organizations, difficulties on the ground have continued to grow in recent years. Above all, in addition to the problem of access to victims, the lack of security and total disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights require our particular attention. Indeed, I am especially worried about the recent increase in aggression against humanitarian personnel. These acts are often carried out with the sole purpose of blocking their access to populations who are suffering. It goes without saying that the authorities hosting the humanitarian workers bear primary responsibility for their safety.

These authorities must also ensure respect for humanitarian law, based on values for which a consensus exists within the international community but whose concrete application on the ground remains a daily challenge. This is another task for the United Nations. Existing legal instruments must be strengthened and expanded in order to extend the same maximum protection to humanitarian personnel in the field as is currently provided for military personnel in peacekeeping missions. In addition, the directives on humanitarian law such as those proposed by the International Committee of the Red Cross should also be revitalized and thoroughly examined.

Our Organization is increasingly confronted with crises that require global responses comprising not only their humanitarian dimensions, but also their military, economic, political and social dimensions. In these circumstances, humanitarian organizations must not only continue to ensure a thorough coordination of the assistance delivered, but also develop stepped-up convergence between, for instance, United Nations Blue Helmets involved in peacekeeping missions and humanitarian workers.

Greater interaction and cooperation between them is imperative if we wish to devise an integrated and suitable response to the ever more complex crisis situations facing the international community.

I believe that much remains to be done in order to improve and develop such cooperation: for example, joint planning for crisis situations, training, defining roles and mandates and, finally, implementation and follow-up of operations.

We must bear in mind that humanitarian assistance must never be used for mere political purposes, and it cannot by itself be intended to provide a lasting solution to a conflict. Humanitarian assistance should therefore never be a substitute for political, diplomatic and military action.

In this context, Belgium, in close cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, intends to organize next year, an international seminar precisely on the relationship between humanitarian, political and military actions. The focus will be on interaction between humanitarian, political and military actors in situations of crisis. This will be an opportunity to analyse closely the often widely varying approaches to this problem.

The objective of international humanitarian assistance is not only to guarantee the survival of victims of humanitarian tragedies. It should also help them be reintegrated into society. Viewed in this fashion, humanitarian assistance is an important factor in the protection of human dignity, human rights and humanitarian law. The international community must therefore put an end to the impunity of persons responsible for grave violations of international humanitarian law, whether committed against populations or humanitarian personnel.

The creation of the ad hoc tribunals for the prosecution and punishment of such violations and the necessary creation of a standing international criminal court, are important steps towards the fulfilment of these goals.

However, it is essential that these international judiciary bodies should be given a fair chance to carry out their functions. Thus, their legal competence should be firmly established and recognized by all Member States.

Respect for human rights has become an essential yardstick of the legitimacy of the exercise of State power and is increasingly considered a vital part of a country's international status and influence. It has become the new basis for the confidence we bestow on our fellow Member States.

Next year the General Assembly will devote part of its session to the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

That Declaration, without any doubt, is one of the most important texts of our times. It is the foundation of the whole array of standards that came after it and that have been incorporated into a number of international legal instruments. It is also the bedrock upon which rest all United Nations activities aimed at better respect for and promotion of human rights, in accordance with the Charter.

In the spirit of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, a growing number of Member States, in full exercise of their sovereignty, have accepted international commitments by ratifying those human rights instruments. However, I should like to express the hope that Member States will also spare no effort in having their provisions implemented. By so doing they will contribute to the universality of human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains an inexhaustible source of hope for all those who are deprived of their rights, especially the victims of social, political or economic exclusion or exploitation on the basis of their race, origin, religion, sex or any other grounds.

Consequently, I, fully subscribe to the Secretary-General's stated intention to integrate human rights horizontally throughout the full range of United Nations

activities. Belgium reiterates to the Secretary-General its full support in this respect.

Let me conclude by saying that my country will make every effort — nationally, regionally and globally — so that the commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be a resounding success that reflects the capital importance of the event.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Samadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): This morning unacceptable claims were made by the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates against the territorial integrity of my country, claims that have no basis in history or international law. My delegation has made its position in this regard very clear on previous occasions.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to its international obligations, especially those arising from the agreement of 1961.

We firmly believe that misunderstandings over the interpretation or application of that agreement, if any, should be addressed with goodwill and through mutually agreed mechanisms in order to find a friendly solution.

My Government remains prepared to take up the misunderstandings over the island of Abu Musa directly with officials of the United Arab Emirates and stands ready to enter into negotiations without preconditions.

As the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterated in his statement before the Assembly three days ago, our message to our neighbours is one of friendship and fraternity, and we shall warmly welcome any initiative to strengthen the foundations of confidence and cooperation in the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Since this is the first time my delegation has spoken in the Assembly at this session, allow me to express our warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to preside over this session.

The Spanish delegation feels obliged to speak in exercise of its right of reply to refer to the mention of the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla in the statement made this afternoon by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco. Such mention is not in keeping with the facts, since those cities are Spanish territories whose citizens are represented in the Spanish Parliament with the same rights and the same status as the rest of their compatriots, and there is no possible parallel with other situations that are totally different in nature.

In addition, such references are not in keeping with the overall relationship that exists between the Kingdoms of Spain and Morocco, both bilaterally and within the broader region to which we both belong, as neighbours.

Mr. Otuyelu (Nigeria): My delegation would like to speak in exercise of its right of reply with reference to the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ireland, in which he said that the human rights situation in Nigeria was an issue of great concern to his Group. We understand that the perception of the situation in Nigeria will be based on the cultural and historical background of the observer.

The situation in Nigeria is that at present all the local government areas — more than 700 — are under democratically elected officials. The operation of the National Human Rights Commission, which is independent of the Government, is living evidence of the commitment of the present Administration to the promotion and protection of human rights.

What Nigeria needs now is not expressions of concern about its capacity to pursue the programmes it

has set for itself, but the understanding and the support of our friends; expressions of concern should not become primary.

We should like to state that the Administration is committed to democratization. The first phase has been completed, and the second and third phases are on course. The promotion of human rights is a priority of the present Administration.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My colleague the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran referred to the statement by the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates this morning on the question of the Iranian occupation of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. I should advise my colleague that when taking up historical, legal and political issues with relation to those three islands he should examine the records of the Security Council since the beginning of that occupation in 1971.

That being said, however, I draw attention to the new trends towards a peaceful settlement of this issue on the basis of confidence-building and good-neighbourliness, and proceeding from our persistent concern to have friendly relations with the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, especially since we believe that conflicts must not be resolved in the contexts of the use of force, but rather in accordance with the international norms enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the rules of international law. In view of all that, the statement by the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates contained nothing counter to international law or international legality. We are invoking our legitimate rights, yet as we speak here in this forum, friendly Iran is still occupying part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.